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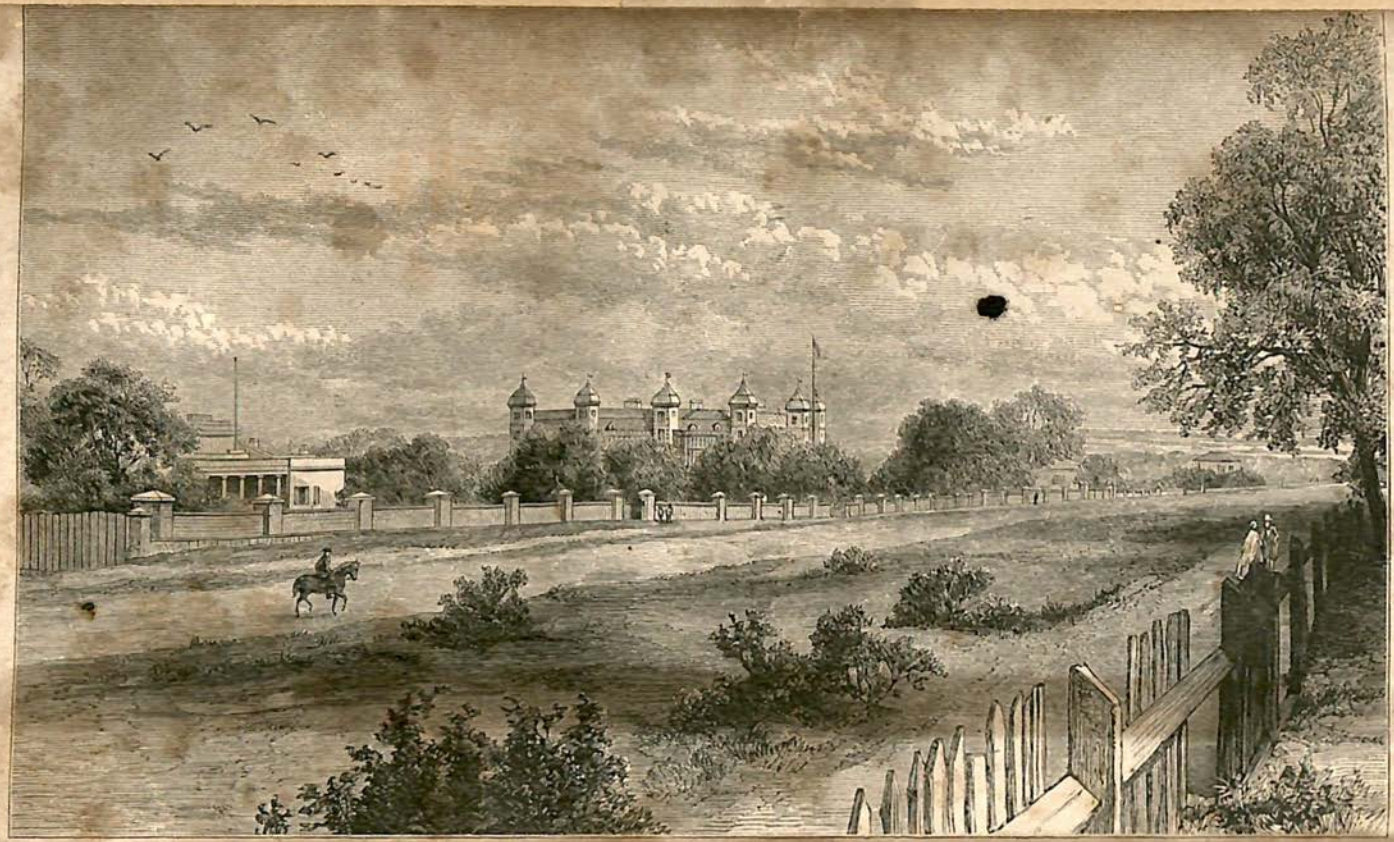
SKETCHES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.



GOVERNMENT HOUSE, PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

AN AUSTRALIAN PARSONAGE;

OR,

B2878

THE SETTLER AND THE SAVAGE

IN

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

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ac.

By Mrs. EDWARD MILLETT.

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LONDON:
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PREFACE.

LARGE in extent and varied in character as is that great district which is called by the general title of Western Australia, little has hitherto been known of it in England, and little interest has been felt either in its history or its progress. The intending emigrant who thinks of turning his steps towards New South Wales, or Victoria, or Tasmania, or Queensland, finds no lack of guide-books and histories by which to form an opinion of the merits or disadvantages of these rival colonies, and it is easy for him to decide which of these divisions of the great Austral continent appears to present the most favourable prospects in his own especial case. But with Western Australia, or, to use the name by which it is more generally known, Swan River, matters are altogether different. Until lately, no guide-book at all; of any later date than twenty years ago, was in existence, and all the information which could be of service to an emigrant was buried in parliamentary blue books and official pamphlets. The report of evidence which had been given before a Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the merits of Western Australia as a convict settlement was the chief source from which we were able to learn anything

respecting the colony when, eight years ago, we first meditated a sojourn in the Southern hemisphere. The peculiar isolation of Swan River, which is imparted to it by its physical geography, has also cut it off in great measure from free communication with its nearer neighbours, so that, even in the other portions of Australia itself, very misty ideas are entertained with regard to it. The following pages do not pretend to the character of either a guide or a history of the colony. They are simply, as their name implies, sketches of the writer's own experiences as a chaplain's wife during five years spent in a country where English colonists of a past generation were disappointed because their ignorance respecting it had induced them to cherish hopes which could never attain fruition, but where modern emigrants may find substantial good if they will confine their expectations to what the land is really capable of producing. The emigrant who desires to meet with minute and technical information will find that the blue book, containing the records of the census of the colony of Western Australia taken in 1870, together with observations upon the results of the census, published by the Registrar-General, Mr. Knight, will be of much service to him. He would also find it advantageous to furnish himself with a little history of Western Australia compiled by the son of the Registrar, Mr. William Knight, containing tables of statistics upon every point on which the intending emigrant or settler could wish to be advised. Both these works

can be obtained by post if ordered from the publisher, Mr. Pether, Perth, Western Australia. The writer ventures to hope that, as she has most carefully avoided saying anything in her pages which could be a cause of pain to any individual amongst her former neighbours and friends in the colony—a task not always easy in a country of such scanty population that everyone within it is known to everyone else either personally or by name—some little measure of good-will and kindly feeling towards herself may remain in the reader's mind when he has come to the conclusion of her unpretending though honest and truthful records. In the very few instances in which reference has been made to the official actions of public functionaries, the writer would wish it to be understood that she gives her husband's opinions as well as her own, as he, from his position as a chaplain upon the Government Establishment, had a fair opportunity of observing in what manner colonial affairs were transacted, and what influences were sometimes brought to bear upon them.

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SKETCHES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

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DECEMBER 10, 1863.—We were now rapidly approaching the shores of Australia. The great ocean birds, which had proved our chief source of amusement ever since we had passed the Cape, had vanished of a sudden. Whether the same identical flock had followed us for the last few weeks, or whether it had been daily replaced by a facsimile, it would be hard to say; at all events, each morning seemed to bring back the familiar feathered friends of yesternight. In them, and in the wild-looking Southern Sea on which they were at home, we had found inexhaustible attractions, for what the scene had lost in colouring as we proceeded southwards it had gained in grandeur. Even when there was but little wind the waves appeared to us to be of far greater size than any which we had previously seen, and it was pleasant to know that this was no mere landsman's fancy, but that their magnitude had

long ago been chronicled by Captain Cook, in his account of his first voyage on the great Southern Ocean.* When we could dispense with the deadlights, on days when a strong breeze was blowing, I used to spend many hours gazing at the view from our open stern-window, and watching its alternations as the vessel rose and fell. At one time I could see nothing but a huge hill of water shutting out all other objects than itself; then, as the ship rose upon the wave, would appear an immense furrowed plain, enlivened by birds of all sizes, from the albatross to the stormy petrel; some following close in our wake, others hovering around us in all directions, whilst others sat tranquilly upon the heaving waters, clustered together as quietly as ducks and geese upon a pond.

On one occasion, when near the islands of St. Paul and Amsterdam, we were caught upon the edge of a heavy gale from the south-west, before which we might have run merrily onwards towards our port, had not our lower deck been filled with emigrants, rendering it impossible to batten down the hatches. We were, therefore, obliged to "lay-to" for some hours—a somewhat provoking delay; but one which enabled us to store up in our memories another picture of the sea, never to be forgotten, its waves all foam and rage, whilst the albatrosses kept holiday amongst them. We had now come so near to our journey's end that our friends the birds deserted us, not liking the warm sea and air of Australia. Having watched and admired them so frequently and so long, we took leave of them with regret, and did not consider the Cape Leeuwin pigeons and the seagulls which met us near the land at

* See Harkesworth's 'Cook's Voyages,' vol. iv., p. 171. Edition third.

all good substitutes for the albatrosses, frigate-birds, and other mid-ocean wanderers.

Early on the morning of the 13th of December, 1863, we espied from our cabin port-hole a lighthouse, standing upon a long green ridge of land, which we knew at once to be Rottnest Island. As this little island is the pilot station for the port of Fremantle we might now consider our voyage as completed, since a very few more hours would bring us to the anchorage. I was not tired of our ship life, but the sight of land, after being so many weeks at sea, brings with it a sensation of pleasure which can scarcely be imagined by those who have never experienced it.

Unhappily our pleasure was not shared by all with whom we had lost sight of the Lizard, since some of our fellow-voyagers had not lived to reach the shore. An emigrant's child had died on board of illness, and a poor young German seaman had fallen overboard. Whilst employed in painting some part of the ship's prow, he fell from a seat slung over the bows, and was drowned before our eyes. We had crossed the southern tropic about a week before, and though the day was fine there was a strong breeze, and a considerable swell upon the water. Five minutes nearly must have been spent in lowering the boat and getting the cork jackets for her crew, so that when the ship's head was brought round, and the boat was able to get away, but very small hope of saving the poor fellow remained. The sailors who manned the boat did their best, remaining so long absent on their search, that all sight of them from the maintop was lost, and the captain began seriously to fear that they too had perished. Their re-appearance was, therefore, a great relief to us all; but

they came up the ship's side with tired and disappointed looks, unaccompanied by their poor comrade, and not having been able even to recover the life buoy which had been thrown overboard the moment that the accident was discovered. The irrepressible curiosity of the emigrants (of whom we had a good many on board) during so much excitement and alarm, led them to invade the forbidden precincts of the poop itself, where they created so much confusion, that the captain not only ordered them all off at once, but, as a punishment, sent them down below under hatches, to remain there until the return of the boat.

A little time afterwards, as I was descending the poop-ladder, my eyes encountered the strange apparition of a female head upon a level with the quarter-deck, reminding me of the heads without bodies ranged upon the shelves of Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors. To strengthen the resemblance, the throat of the solitary head was bound by the narrow red rim of a deck-ventilator; but the illusion thus created was counterbalanced by the strong expression of curiosity in the wide open eyes, utterly unlike the closed orbs of the decapitated models in Baker Street. I recognized the features as those of one of the emigrant girls, who, having pushed her head through the orifice as if it had been a chimney, was now resting her chin in a raised position upon the edge of it—an attitude which would have been considered martyrdom if otherwise than self-imposed, but cheerfully sustained, in the hope of circumventing the captain by obtaining a glimpse of what was going on.

It takes but a little time to wind up the worldly affairs of the poor, and in the evening of the same day on which the poor young seaman was lost, his very small chest was

sealed up and stowed away in an empty cabin, to be sent hereafter, if possible, to his relations at home. These sad circumstances received additional pathos when we heard from another of the crew, who was also a German, that the poor fellow had sailed upon his voyage without his parents' knowledge, and that he had of late expressed much regret on this account. His death, though a sad and solitary one, was not without its tribute of tears, for one of the emigrants' children, to whom he had often given part of his Sunday dinner, cried very bitterly for his loss.

Though we lost but one man by drowning, it was not the only time that the agitating cry of "man overboard!" was heard. We were roused early one morning by a great noise on deck, as of all the yards and sails being let fall at once, and, on looking from our stern window, we saw a boat rising and falling on the waves, first hidden for a few seconds, and then again the red shirt of the steerer rising into view. Our inquiries received for answer that a man had tumbled into the water through sheer negligence, and a minute or two afterwards we heard the doctor bidding the steward to have plenty of hot water and mustard ready, in case they should be wanted. All this care proved quite needless, as the missing man was soon seen returning, not only in his senses, but in such excellent case as to be hard at work baling out the boat which had picked him up Being a good swimmer, he had easily kept himself afloat, and the sea was so warm, as we were then in the tropics, that his fear of drowning was very secondary to his dread of sharks. He did not obtain much sympathy for his ducking, as he was known to have gone overboard through gross carelessness once if not twice before, and it seemed

the general opinion that any repetition of the manœuvre was to be regarded as an aggravation of an old offence.

I have mentioned the emigrants as forming a large proportion of the passengers on board our ship, and we could not avoid thinking that some of them were not exactly of a character to make a favourable impression when they should land in their new home. They were divided into three classes,—married couples with their families, single women, and single men. The three classes were berthed apart, and all communication down below carefully cut off. The married folks were mostly decent, respectable people, but both the single men and the single women were decidedly wanting in propriety of behaviour, though the women were worse than the men. They were all under the official charge of the doctor, and a great deal of trouble did they give both to him and to the captain. My husband had offered to act as chaplain while on board, if given the necessary official authority and position, but he was told at the Emigration Office that chaplains were no longer appointed to either emigrant or convict ships, "religious instructors" being substituted for them in the latter vessels, while the former are left to take their chance; he accordingly possessed no official character whatever on board, although he usually performed divine service on Sunday whenever the weather would permit.

Of the single girls we had more than sixty on board our ship, and one fortnight's acquaintance with them had sufficed to show us that they were a most unpromising set; and moreover, our early impression that several of them had made acquaintance with the inside of a jail was not at all effaced by the experience and events of the

voyage. One of them, whose hair when she came on board was cropped suspiciously short, accounted for it by saying that her sister-in-law used to pull it out when they had a quarrel; but she was not the only one who might have been supposed to have been under the hands of the prison barber, for several others were in a similar predicament as to the paucity, or rather brevity, of their locks.

There were perpetual complaints throughout the voyage, caused by the petty thefts committed upon one another by these damsels, such as purloining the steel from each other's crinolines, appropriating articles of clothing, little brooches, and such-like; but the favourite objects of cupidity were the photographs of other people's sweethearts, the abstraction of which was an act of aggression which seemed to demand the taking of some especial precautions for the general security, and accordingly the girls came one morning in a body to the captain, bringing with them a pile of likenesses, of which they solemnly requested him to take charge until the ship should reach Fremantle. The first of these girls whom I addressed when we joined the ship at Gravesend was, I noticed, eating eagerly, and she told me, in reply to my questions, that she had been much weakened and pulled down through the want of food which she had endured during the cotton famine at Manchester. Her face then bore witness to her story, for it was quite thin and wrinkled, though she was, she told me, but three-and-twenty. When we had been at sea a few weeks she had grown quite fat and young-looking, and, in company with her saucy, good-for-nothing companions, was seen pitching her allowance into the sea on pretence that the meat was bad,

although it was out of the same cask of pork then in use in the cabin, the goodness of which we had especially noticed. In fact all the arrangements for the food and general comfort of the emigrants were so good, that I often used to wish that some of the respectable poor whom I had known at home were there to enjoy them; but this was before I knew the colony to which we were sailing, and the dangerous prospects it presents to respectable women if unmarried and without parents.

Our voyage had, upon the whole, been a most prosperous one. Since we had left the Channel we had enjoyed a succession of lovely weather, and had only been forced to "lay-to" on one day—that which I have already mentioned;. but while in the Channel the weather had for ten days been very stormy and severe. Indeed, on one or two occasions during that time, we had had to encounter very serious gales, accompanied with some real danger and with much discomfort to the emigrants. During the worst of the weather my husband used to go down into the married people's quarters to look after the women and children, and to give them biscuits and raisins and any little dainties with which we had provided ourselves for our own use on the voyage.

There was one emigrant from the far north of Scotland —I think the Shetland Isles—whose wife was always ill and low-spirited, let the weather be what it might, and who, when at her worst, could suggest nothing eatable that she fancied except "a Wick herring," drawled out in such very broad Scotch as took a practised ear to understand. "A wee drap o' whuskey," which she proposed as an accompaniment to the herring, my husband was able to

procure for her, and a few of our sardines proved a tolerable substitute for the unattainable fish of the North. That was indeed a sorry ten days for those who were neither exempt from sea-sickness nor able to battle stoutly against it, and the doctor was seriously afraid that one at least of the emigrant women would succumb under her sufferings. The winds were so perverse that the Isle of Wight disappeared and re-appeared to us so often that we grew weary of bidding it farewell, and began to think that we were never to leave the Channel behind us and fairly enter upon our voyage.

On this jumping, stormy sea, upon which it seemed unfit for the "chicks" of anyone but Mother Carey to be introduced into the world, our ship's company was increased by the birth of two babies. The parents of one of them had set their hearts on calling it after the ship; but as in this case the child would have had to bear a name making it a certain butt for small wits all its life long, my husband persuaded them to give up the notion, and to let him christen it after the doctor and the captain instead.

We had with us also a family of children from Yorkshire, whose mother, whenever it was a windy night, laid all the blame of it upon her husband for ever having sent to bring her out. On these occasions she would moan out, "O my bairns! my honeys! I will never forgive thy father for sending for us!" She used to say that he had gone out some years before as a shoemaker, and had now sent money for his family to follow him. She omitted, however, to add that his own expenses to Australia had been defrayed by Government.

Towards the end of our voyage, when everybody was getting into high spirits, and even our poor Scotchwoman was cheering up, the emigrants, married and single, gave a tea-party, by permission of the captain, to which he and the doctor and the cabin passengers received a ceremonious invitation, indited on a note of pink paper by the best penwoman of the steerage. The tables were supplied solely with what the givers of the feast had been saving for three days beforehand from their allowances. We had no sooner descended into the steerage, which served as reception and tea-room, than the Yorkshire woman came up and asked us for a sixpence, not to "pay our footing," as might have been supposed, but for insertion in a fortune-telling cake, wherein a ring and a thimble had been already hidden, and nothing but a piece of silver was wanting to complete the equipment of the oracle. As neither of us had any coin smaller than a shilling about us, it was lucky that the larger piece of money would answer as well as the sixpence, and three of the company were thus enabled to learn their future fortunes to a nicety. There had been a great deal of rivalry displayed that day in cake-making, but this stroke of imagination at once decided the votes in favour of the one produced by the Yorkshire woman. Possibly, however, the opportunity that had been afforded to the single persons of prying into their destiny caused the intrinsic merits of some of the other cakes to be overlooked, just as one sees, in the every-day affairs of life, the claims of modest merit passed by in order to bestow honour on a charlatan. This was the first and only *soirée* that I ever attended on the high seas, and, in a week

after its celebration, the captain put his passengers safely ashore, and resigned his curatorship of the lovers' portraits.

A few hours after passing the island of Rottnest we dropped anchor in Gage's Roads, about half a mile from the shore, and just opposite to the town of Fremantle, the chief port of Swan River. There is no regular harbour here, but only a roadstead, the bar at the mouth of the river prohibiting the entrance of any but very small vessels. The long line of shore was backed by forest, above which rose here and there the smoke of a bush fire as from a far-off colliery. The tall heavy-topped trees reminded me, at a distance, of Scotch firs; to which, however, they bear no other resemblance on near approach than the great height to which they reach, and the fact that their foliage is principally upon the uppermost branches. The pleasurable feeling of seeing the mainland was marred by the view of the first building that we could distinguish plainly upon it, namely, a long white prison on the hill-top erected for the reception of convicts, which, by way of flattering the imagination both of those within and without its walls, is commonly called the "Establishment." There were three other merchant vessels at anchor in the roads near our own ship, one of which had met with rough treatment from the same gale which we had encountered off St. Paul's. Part of her bulwarks and her galley had been washed overboard, and she had now come in for repairs.

Our voyage terminated upon a Saturday, and as there was no possibility of getting our heavy goods landed before Monday, we had nearly made up our minds to spend two

more nights on board, when a boat came alongside, carrying a clergyman, who introduced himself as the chaplain of Fremantle, and begged us with much kindness to return with him and pass the Sunday at his house. We gladly accepted his hospitable proposal, and came ashore, bringing with us our favourite little black and tan terrier, "Lady."

As we drew near we saw a scattered little town of white houses, looking like the beginning of an English watering-place, and passed a boat or two rowed by men on whose hats "Water Police" was inscribed; but the jetty upon which we landed was so lonely and deserted that, with the exception of these amphibious guardians of the peace, one might have supposed that the great jail upon the hill had absorbed almost all the population. Three men, two ladies with crinolines of considerable magnitude, and a large dog, were the only beings assembled at the landing-place where we left the boat. I had been curious to see whether our little dog would show much delight when she found her feet once more upon dry land after her three months' voyage; but my desire to notice this was unluckily disappointed, for the two dogs immediately began running races together, and it was impossible to tell whether "Lady's" hilarity was due to the pleasure of meeting her fellow-creature, or to finding herself on *terra firma.*

The sand of the beach was so white and deep that our foot-prints, when we crossed it, looked like tracks on snow, an illusion which, on further acquaintance with the shore, we found to be much encouraged by the loose nature of the sand, often blown into drifts and half bury-

ing the dwarf cedars which grow above high-water mark. Nevertheless the sands at Fremantle are less dazzlingly white than those to the northward of the colony at Champion Bay, where, as a woman-servant told me, clothes, after starching, might be laid upon the ground to dry without any fear of the linen becoming soiled. The fig-trees and geraniums that grow around the houses of the town were all peppered with the sand blown on them by the wind, giving a comfortless untidy look to the little gardens. The heat was extreme, the month being December, the Australian midsummer, and our feet were quite burnt in walking through a small remaining part of the old primeval forest, deep with sand, which formed a short cut to the Parsonage. The shrubs which we passed on our way attracted our attention as being of a kind which we had hitherto seen only in conservatories or arboretums, and also as being our first specimens of Australian vegetation.

Our kind guide, by way of introducing us as quickly as possible to all objects of interest in our new country, hailed for us a native who was passing at a little distance, but he was a very sorry specimen, being without exception more ugly and ill-favoured than any whom we ever saw afterwards, and one-eyed into the bargain. The English reader should remember, when he peruses the accounts given by many travellers of the low and degraded appearance of the Australian natives, that no one can form a just opinion of them until he has seen them in their natural state, far away from towns and living the free wild life of the bush. It is as unfair to accept as samples of their race those natives who hang idling about the colonial towns, as it would be to suppose that a common street

beggar of London was a type of the English peasant. The day after our arrival being Sunday, my husband returned to the ship, according to promise, to read prayers to the emigrants, of whom the greater part were still on board. The captain sent his own boat for him, under command of the second mate, who was eager to tell of an accident which had befallen one of our fellow-passengers, a Roman Catholic priest who had been on shore, like ourselves, and had been anxious to return to the vessel early on the Sunday morning to look after some of the Irish emigrants of his faith. A good deal of sea was running when two "green hands," as the mate called them, undertook to bring him off from the shore, and they very nearly succeeded in drowning him alongside the ship by capsizing the boat, which they were unable to manage properly. Meanwhile I went to the colonial church of Fremantle, where, as I was not supposed to know that the choir was led by a ticket-of-leave holder, everything seemed homelike. The prayer for the Governor, however, used in place of that for the High Court of Parliament, recalled to me my absence from England; as did also, on the conclusion of the prayers, an appeal from the clergyman to his congregation on behalf of their fellow-colonists at Champion Bay, whose standing crops had been destroyed by fire.

After my husband's return from the ship we spent the evening at the Parsonage, a very pretty and comfortable-looking house, and as our host and hostess were unable to give us beds, made our way about ten o'clock to the 'Emerald Isle Hotel,' where we had engaged rooms the day before, and where our landlady took all possible pains to make us feel at home. On Monday we went back once

more to the ship, like a couple of Robinson Crusoes, and were hard at work all day packing up our things for our final departure to the shore. Unfortunately, when we had completed our task late in the afternoon, an obstacle presented itself which we had not foreseen, and which hindered our return that evening. The wind had risen so rapidly, and had caused so much sea, that the captain thought it unsafe to send a boat on shore with us, so that we were forced to remain all night on board. After all the trouble which we had had in stitching up the wrappers which contained our bedding, we could not endure the idea of again unpacking it; we therefore spread out our cloaks and shawls upon the cabin floor and laid ourselves down to wait patiently until morning. About seven o'clock the next day a boat took us off, and we bade an adieu to the ship in which we had spent so many happy days, and had experienced but this one night's hard lodging. We returned to our hotel, where we thoroughly enjoyed our breakfast of fresh fish, ripe figs, and bananas, and began to prepare for our trip up the river to Perth, the capital of the colony.

Before I say good-bye to Fremantle, I must give some account of its situation and appearance. Although considered the chief port of the colony it is but a small unpretending little town, and one which makes but a slight impression upon a new-comer. In the main street, and in the three or four short thoroughfares which connect the sea-jetty with the river-pier and wharf, there are a few handsome and substantial houses, belonging either to the Government or to some of the principal inhabitants. In these streets, too, are situated the larger

and more important shops, or rather "stores," of the chief traders of the town. The colonial church, which I have already mentioned, is well placed at the point where the main street branches off into two roads at a considerable angle to one another. On the point of ground between these two diverging streets, and facing the very centre of the main street as it leads from the shore, stands the church, surrounded by a large churchyard. Although the situation of the building is so good, it cannot lay claim to much beauty either externally or within; it is of fair size, and sufficiently commodious in its arrangement, but that is all that can be said for it. The Roman Catholics possess a much prettier and more ecclesiastical-looking place of worship, and their convent and clergy-house also are neat and cheerful-looking buildings.

The huge convict prison, situated on the brow of the hill which overlooks the harbour at the distance of, perhaps, half a mile, may compare favourably with most of our English jails, both as to the character and solidity of the architecture and the excellence of the interior arrangements. In the immediate vicinity of the "Establishment" stand the residences of the various officials, looking much like a terrace of semi-detached villas in the suburbs of London. A chapel also, quite distinct from the colonial church which I have described, is connected with the prison, and is served by a chaplain specially appointed to the charge by the authorities at home. From the hill upon which all these buildings stand the eye ranges over a large extent of very varied and diversified scenery. In the immediate foreground lie the banks of the estuary,

still covered in many places with low forest and thick masses of brushwood. The stream, breaking upon the river bar, throws up a number of rapid eddies, which catch the blazing southern sun and sparkle like diamonds in its light. Near the sea-jetty the river is separated from the shore by a fine promontory jutting out boldly into deep water, and at its base are two or three little bays, floored with the whitest sand, and backed by fine weather-worn cliffs of some thirty feet in height. On this headland stands the inner lighthouse, below which is a landing quay, built for the whale fishery, and a curious tunnel, made through the neck of the promontory to give access from the quay to the shore near the jetty.

Looking seaward, the eye passes over the pier and the vessels lying in the inner anchorage, to rest at last on the winter roadstead and the distant shores of Garden Island and Rottnest. The remainder of the town is clustered around the base of the hill, and bears somewhat of that untidy, unfinished look inseparable from half-completed streets and unpaved footpaths. There are no continuous rows of shops, but all the minor stores, and the open fruit and fish stalls, are scattered about in all directions, and do not make nearly as good a show as if collected into a regular compact street. This gives the town a bare and deserted appearance, as if no business were being transacted, which is really not the case, although the trade certainly is not a very lively one.

We found, on inquiry, that the distance from Fremantle to Perth was about fourteen miles by the river, and two or three less by land, but that the route by

water was considered the prettier. We therefore sent our lighter luggage to the river pier, to be embarked on board the primitive-looking little steamboat, and joined her ourselves an hour afterwards.

It naturally strikes a new-comer with surprise to notice that the early colonial authorities, who decided on the locality of Perth, have not built their city upon the same side of the river as that on which Fremantle is situated. One could almost suppose that the founders of the capital had been enthusiastic engineers of the Brindley type, and that in the same manner as he believed rivers to have been created "to feed canals," they must have entertained the idea that the special object of a stream was to afford an opportunity for a bridge. At all events the placing of Perth on the northern bank of the Swan has been attended with very inconvenient and costly results. The rocky bar at the entrance of the river is no sooner crossed than the stream expands into a wide estuary, and any bridge built to connect the two banks must be not only of great width, but also of sufficient height to allow the masts of small vessels to pass beneath its road-way. Even the founders of Perth themselves, perhaps, never contemplated the carrying of a road across this part of the Swan, but during our stay in the colony a fine timber bridge, upwards of 300 yards in length, and answering all requisites in height, was not only begun but completed. The work was carried out entirely by convict labour—the only manner in which such an undertaking could ever have been effected in so thinly peopled a colony. Up to the time that this bridge was erected the banks

of the river were united by one bridge only; and that at Perth, where, though the actual channel of the Swan is of no great width, a very long causeway is rendered necessary by the character of the land on the southern bank, which is low and much flooded in winter. On the small and insignificant causeway which existed at this place when we first went to Perth, a spot was pointed out to me where a gentleman had been drowned on horseback in trying to pass the bridge whilst the river was in a state of flood. Such accidents are happily rendered improbable in future by a new causeway of very great length, which was, like the bridge at Fremantle, begun and finished under the auspices of Governor Hampton, who, in promoting the construction of these two public works, has rectified, as far as may be, for Perth the disadvantages of a site in which beauty of locality was the single recommendation.

There are three little steamboats upon the Swan, two of them plying regularly between Perth and Fremantle, and venturing, in very calm weather, as far into the open sea as the inner roads; while the third, which is little more than a flat-bottomed barge, fitted with a small stern wheel, manages to ascend the river to Guildford, a few miles beyond Perth. These boats are, even yet, the only representatives of the *genus* steamer belonging to the colony, although coasting steam-vessels are much required, and would probably pay well if judiciously managed. In fact, the means of locomotion, whether by sea or land, are very deficient throughout the colony.

A journey to the northern settlement at Champion Bay occupies three weeks when undertaken overland, as

no relays of horses can be procured *en route;* and, if performed by sea, the traveller must make up his mind to such accommodation as can be offered in one of the little sailing vessels which ply along the coast in fine weather, on board which (if he retains any appetite) he will probably help himself at dinner to chops served up in the frying-pan, and to potatoes either in the saucepan or in a wash-hand basin. In journeying to the south of the colony matters are a trifle less inconvenient, as the distance is shorter. The horrors of the voyage are curtailed, and the land journey of eleven days may even be reduced to five by travelling day and night in the cart which carries letters from Perth to meet the Peninsular and Oriental mail steamboat at Albany.

We found that those who advised our proceeding to Perth by the river had in no degree overrated its attractions. Generally speaking, the one great deficiency in Australian scenery is the want of water, but here at least this is not the case. For more than fifteen miles of its course the Swan resembles an arm of the sea rather than a river, and gives to the fine forest landscape through which it flows that charm which nothing else can supply. Its expanse of land-locked water would form one of the finest natural harbours in the world were it not for the bar at the river's mouth. One of the reaches, which reminded us of Milford Haven, might have held a large fleet, with room to spare. Alas, that whilst flies have found their way into amber and reels into bottles, where probably neither of the articles was wanted, no conjuror has yet arisen to discover some method of introducing merchant ships into these safe and tempting waters!

Whilst upon this subject, I may mention that the river originally gave its name to the whole of the colony, and that the old term, "the Swan River Settlement," is still often used, in an arbitrary sense, to denote the immense country now included under the general name of Western Australia.

Whether approached by the river or the road, the picturesque appearance of Perth cannot fail to excite admiration. The bold promontory of Mount Eliza screens the colonial metropolis from view almost till the moment of reaching it, and when this point is rounded the eye is at once attracted by a steep bank sloping rapidly down to the river, crowned with many pretty residences covered with luxuriant creepers, whilst the orange trees and bamboos with which the gardens are filled form a rich foreground in front of the houses, the mass of green foliage descending almost as low as the water's edge. At the present time the new Roman Catholic cathedral, standing upon an eminence and built of white stone, is the most prominent object, but at the date of our landing it was less conspicuous, as the steeple had not even been commenced. The cathedral of St. George, belonging to the Church of England, is unfortunately built upon the model of suburban churches such as were common in the early part of this century, and is certainly anything but an ornament to the town when seen from the water.

I was much struck by the fig-trees in the bishop's garden close to the river; they were of such great size that I mistook them at first for horse-chestnuts. Everywhere the flowers delighted me. The oleander trees were full of blossom, looking like gigantic bouquets; and geranium

bushes were so common that I saw clothes hung out to dry upon them. Soon after we had landed we strolled out to look about us, and as our first wish naturally was to see something of the "bush," we walked to the top of Mount Eliza, but the beauty of the wild flowers was over, as the intense heat of the summer had commenced. I was, however, much pleased at finding a low-growing geranium, with a very sweet-scented leaf; and my false impression that there were no singing birds in Australia was agreeably contradicted by hearing one with two or three very sweet notes.

As we were to remain but a short time in Perth, and then to proceed to the chaplaincy to which my husband was appointed, at some distance up the country, it was necessary to make arrangements to have our heavy goods landed from the ship as soon as possible. We soon learned that it was usual that all cumbrous and weighty packages should be carried from the ship direct to Perth, and that it was unnecessary to pass them through the custom-house at Fremantle, provided that they had been examined on board before having been finally fastened up. Luckily the captain had advised us to have this done before we left the vessel, so that we had no custom-house difficulties to contend with now, and could arrange matters in the manner most convenient to ourselves with reference to our journey into the interior. We engaged a man who agreed to fetch our goods from the anchorage in a cargo-boat, and to deposit them at the wharf at Guildford, a small town about eight or nine miles from Perth, from whence they would be carried up the country in some of the carts or wagons which had brought down sandal-

wood or wool for exportation. These cargo-boats are something of a cross between a Thames barge and a fishing-sloop. Some of them, which are used to convey goods to the vessels in the winter roads about eight miles from the shore, are large strong boats, able to stand a heavy sea; while the others are smaller and lighter, and fit only for summer work. These boats are all built to draw but little water, and are flat-bottomed, so as to enable them to pass the river bar. Having completed all necessary arrangements we were at liberty to explore the city, and to form an opinion upon the merits and demerits of our new country.

CHAPTER II.

Description of Perth—View over Melville Water—Old Government House and Gardens—New Government House considered by some persons to be too large—Employment of convicts in Perth—No chain-gangs seen there—Immigrants' home—Anecdotes of some of the emigrants from our ship—Mistakes amongst poor in England as to the geographical position of Western Australia, and distance from Sydney, Melbourne, and Hobart Town—Difficulty experienced by Emigration Commissioners at home in procuring free emigrants for Swan River—Additional public buildings in Perth erected during the last three years—Town Hall—Wesleyan Church.

THE situation of Perth is, as I have already said, a very pretty one. The river is there so wide, and the inward sweep taken by its bank so bold, that the town appears to stand rather upon the shore of some fine lake than upon that of so unimportant a stream as the Swan. This bay, chosen for the site of the capital, is called Melville Water, and is formed by a deep curve of the river bank, commencing at the promontory of Mount Eliza, and extending for a distance of about a mile and a half until it returns towards the opposite shore again by a low sandy stretch of land which almost conceals the farther upward course of the river's channel. Mount Eliza forms a prominent element in the beauty of this spot. Towards the river it is almost precipitous, rising in bold cliffs to a height of about 150 feet from the water which washes its base. On the landward side the hill is differently shaped, since one side slopes very gradually away from the summit, in a direction parallel to the shore, until it meets the low

ground nearly level with the beach, upon which the end of Perth farthest from the river mouth is placed. Upon the verge of this slope, and having an elevated position above Melville Water, as well as an easy access from the lower part of the town, are built some of the best houses in Perth, and the view from them is so fine that it seems a pity that advantage should not have been taken of so good a site for Government House, instead of placing it where it now stands in the lower part of the town, and but a few feet above the river.

One of the best placed of these houses is Bishop's House, as the residence belonging to the see of Perth is called, and from its gardens the view may be enjoyed in perfection. Looking down from a height of nearly a hundred feet at the town and river below, the spectator beholds a mass of cool luxuriant foliage, formed by the glossy leaves of the bananas and bamboos which thrive in the narrow strip of swampy ground which runs along the bottom of the hill-side. On the slope itself the dark green of the orange and lemon trees, mingled with the lighter shades of the apricot, almond, and peach, forms a rich scene of verdure, which is charmingly relieved and brightened by the rosy blossoms of the large oleanders with which many of the gardens are crowded. Glancing over this lovely foreground, and looking somewhat up the river and towards the north-east, the eye, after admiring the contrast of the bright water glowing in the full blaze of the Australian sun seen against the dark forests of the opposite shore, rests finally upon the blue summits of the hills of the Darling Range. These hills form the back-bone of the more settled dis-

tricts of the Swan River colony, and, rising to the height of from 1500 to 2000 feet, lie parallel to the western coast, at a distance varying from fifteen to twenty-five miles from the sea.

When strolling about the streets of Perth for the first time, the stranger will notice a certain unconnected look about the different houses and Government offices. Most of the buildings are handsome and well arranged; but each one seems to stand alone, and the next neighbour to a large and well-stocked "store," or to the private house of an important official, may be the cottage of a shoemaker or the yard of a blacksmith. Moreover, since almost all the houses in the best parts of the town stand in their own gardens, no actual streets can be said to be formed by them, and the general appearance of the whole place is rather that of one of those suburbs to which the business men of our large towns at home retire after their day's toil is over, than that of the working hive itself. Although this impression given by the first view of Perth is doubtless disappointing to anyone who arrives with the hope of making money therein, it makes the place much prettier than it would probably be if a larger trade were carried on there. There is a look of cheerfulness and brightness about the many gardens which surround the houses and the avenue of trees which lines each side of the main road passing from one end to the other of the town, that makes the new-comer feel that a home there might be a very pleasant one.

After landing at the pier, and having been directed to proceed up a rather ugly street which leads from the river into the main road which I have just mentioned, the

stranger finds himself in the centre of Perth. If he looks up the street, towards Mount Eliza, he sees, at some half a mile's distance, a large red brick building of considerable pretensions, placed upon the slope of the hill, and facing the very centre of the main street. I believe that this really fine building has been erected for the head-quarters and barracks of the Pensioner Force which has been introduced into the colony during the era of transportation, but as it was only just finished when we left the colony, I am not certain what may be its final destination. This main street, of which I have several times spoken, is of great width, and being planted on each side with Cape lilacs (which, unlike any of the native trees, give an excellent shade when full grown) has already a very pleasant and verdant look, and will, when the trees are a little taller, make a really fine boulevard.

Looking from the top of the street leading from the pier, in the opposite direction and down the town, the gardens of the "old Government House" are close upon the right hand, together with the building itself, which is rather small and low, and is now used for various official purposes. These gardens are well laid out, and contain a few fine specimens of auracarias and pines, although they cannot boast of any especial rarities, and make no pretence to botanical completeness. A few attempts at acclimatization have been made, but none of any consequence, and there is still ample room for further efforts in that most useful direction. In the centre of the gardens is, perhaps, the best specimen in Western Australia of that great desideratum, a green lawn. It is formed of a grass called in Perth, Indian coutch grass,

which is the only sort yet discovered that can stand the summer suns without being burnt up into hay. Owing to this benevolent Indian turf, the young ladies of Perth are not deprived of the delights of croquet; but are able, like their English sisters, to maintain a club for that purpose, since the Governor has kindly permitted these gardens to be used as a sort of public park.

Close to "old Government House" stands the new abode of state completed about eight years ago, having been erected entirely by convict labour. It is a fine massive building, and externally appears well suited to the abode of a representative of the Queen. Complaints have been made that more money has been spent upon this new Government House than suited the interests of the colony, and that too large an amount of convict labour also has been devoted to a building which is, say the murmurers, too grand for the pretensions of the settlement; money which might have been applied to road making and other similar useful works. I cannot help believing that this grumbling has arisen because, as being built and finished entirely by convict labour, no profits whatever from the erection of this large work have flowed into Perth pockets, and no *immediate* advantage to Western Australia has been seen to follow the expenditure of so great an amount of both money and labour as has been required to complete the new structure. I suppose that the same feeling has been excited in all the colonies to which transportation has been attempted, and that Swan River has only followed an example set before her by other districts in looking at such questions solely from her own point of view, and in

striving to obtain as large a share as possible of all the expenditure connected with the maintenance and feeding of the convicts, whilst anxious to monopolize the benefits accruing from their labour as well. However this may be it cannot be denied that any work which is not thoroughly a colonial work, such as bridges, piers, or roads, but conducive only to the interests of the Home Government and its officials, such as this new building in question, is pretty sure to be unpopular in Swan River. The settlers would like to contract for the supply of all the necessaries used by the convict labourers at a good price, and then to have the entire benefit of their labour in addition, and seem scarcely satisfied unless this is the case, even though the Governor may have exerted himself to the utmost in striving to develop the country as rapidly as possible.

Having touched upon this subject, I may here notice that the existence and employment of convicts is much less striking to the eye of a stranger in Perth, and in the country districts, than it is at Fremantle, owing chiefly to the fact that it is only at the latter place, and close to the "Establishment," that any fettered men are ever seen at work. Of necessity irons *must* be used upon some of the thoroughly unruly prisoners, and a chain-gang must be a sight sometimes seen in any country where a large number of men are undergoing the sentences due to their crimes; but it is only at Fremantle that men under *severe* discipline are ever met with in the streets, and though you may there pass a body of fifty or a hundred men marching back from their work in chains, and escorted by warders with loaded and cocked revolvers in their

hands, ready for use in an instant, still it is only in the immediate vicinity of the great prison that such a sight is ever witnessed, and it must be remembered that in that comparatively small body of men are collected all those convicts who cannot be trusted to obey the very mild rule by which the remaining five or six thousand men of the criminal class who are scattered over the country are governed. At Perth, and in the most solitary country districts also, if you happen to meet a "road party" of convicts, returning from their labour upon the highways under charge of their warder, you see no chains or fetters of any description, secret or open, neither is the warder armed with any visible weapon, not even a sword in its sheath; he may possibly have a revolver in his pocket, as he is, I believe, allowed to carry one if he thinks fit; but the chances are twenty to one that he has left it at home in his own hut, if it be a bush road party, or perhaps has even given it to the constable of the party, himself a convict, to clean.

During the whole time of our sojourn in the colony we never heard of any instance of an attack upon their warder made by one of those parties of convicts, some fifteen to twenty in number, who are sent out into the interior to construct the roads, and are thence called road parties. The danger lies the other way; the temptation to make friends of some of the more decent of the men under his charge is so great, in the solitude of the bush, that an unmarried warder requires much strength of mind to resist it. With a married man the case is different; *he* has his own family around him in his hut, and does not feel so solitary as the single man,

who has no one to speak a kind word to him but the sinners under his charge. Good as the West Australia system of transportation has proved itself to be in the towns, where the warders can find companionship in their own class of society, it fails in the bush in this respect. No warder ought to be exposed to even the *possibility* of being compelled to seek his sole acquaintanceships or friendships in the criminal class; he ought always to have, at least, one man, untainted by crime like himself, to speak to and associate with. It is too much to expect of human nature to ask a man to live alone month after month, without anyone of his own class near him. There is indeed a gaol at Perth, and one rather larger than would usually be required in a town of some 3000 inhabitants, but it is in the less prominent part of the town and easily passed by unnoticed, so that, on the whole, an inobservant person might readily pass a week in the place and never perceive that there was a single convict in the colony.

There are not many public buildings in Perth demanding notice beyond those I have already mentioned, with the exception of two or three pretty chapels, or churches as they are now usually termed, belonging to the Nonconformists, and also the schoolhouse under the Board of Education, which is so built as to be often mistaken for a small chapel, its exterior being so ecclesiastical looking. I have already mentioned the two cathedrals belonging respectively to the Churches of England and of Rome, and need not again refer to either of them. The hotels in the town are comfortable and the charges moderate; the stranger will find the *table d'hôte* system prevalent in

most of them, although he may have his meals in private if he prefers to do so; or, if he desires to obtain lodgings in a private house, he will not find much difficulty in procuring accommodation of a respectable and convenient character.

There was, however, another public building which we were anxious to visit before we left Perth for the interior, and that was the "Home." This is a Government asylum, established as a respectable refuge for all those emigrants from England who may not have succeeded in obtaining employment immediately after landing; and it is also used as a sort of almshouse or workhouse for those old people who may have fallen into poverty, and for whom Government aid has become indispensable. Purists in language insist upon calling this building the Immigrants' Home, whilst others, who remember that its especial purpose is to provide a shelter for those new-comers who have not as yet been able to convert themselves into dwellers in the new country, in any useful sense of the term, but are still as waifs and strays cast upon its shore, consider that Emigrants' Home is the more legitimate title for the abode of those unlucky exports from England who have not at once been able to obtain admission into the human circulation of the new country, but are still, as it were, in store at the place of landing.

On inquiring at the "Home" as to the fate of our old acquaintances on board ship, we learned that our Yorkshire friend, the successful cake maker, had been joined on landing by a very decent-looking man who was doing well as a shoemaker, and who seemed, though a convict, to be respected as a man of business. He had prepared

a very comfortable home for his wife and children, and it seemed probable that they might all prosper, could she make up her mind to do her best in a scene so totally new to her.

This family seemed the only one among the "married people" class of immigrants that had much prospect of a good start in their new country. Several of our other shipmates were still lingering unemployed in the "Home," apparently very downhearted. The place did not look much like its name of "home" to the new-comers just at first, for, to an English eye, the accommodation, which is quite sufficient for comfort in the climate of Australia, looks bare and cold and meagre, so that it gave our poor friends somewhat of the same impression which we can fancy to be made upon a previously happy child, when it is introduced into one of those schools called "happy homes" in the advertisements.

We were shown into a long room, divided off into separate spaces by wooden partitions, each space being of good size, and doing duty as a private apartment, but much resembling the loose boxes in a nobleman's hunting stable. These represented unfurnished lodgings for the immigrants, some of whom, perhaps, would, if the spaces had contained more accommodation, have bestirred themselves but slowly in seeking independent homes of their own. The place was perfectly clean and well ventilated, and plenty of water was at hand in the yard of the building, a great comfort with the thermometer at 90° as it then was. There was also no lack of water in the form of tears as we went in, for a poor old Irishwoman, whom we found sitting on the floor, with her feet straight out before her

and her back against the wall, just as we had often seen her sitting on deck resting against the bulwarks, was crying grievously, in company with her daughter. When we learned the reason for all this lamentation we did not wonder that they were both disconsolate. The poor souls had come out to Swan River intending to proceed from thence, believing it to be a very easy trip, to join the husband and father in Melbourne; and they now found themselves in Australia with almost less chance of getting to Melbourne, in their penniless condition, than if they had remained in London.

Another emigrant, who came from the Midland counties of England, and whose relations lived in Tasmania, was in equal trouble. He assured my husband that he had been told at the Emigration Office at home that he could easily reach Hobart Town when once landed at Perth, and supposed that he would have to go thither by coach, but wished to know whether he would be more than one night upon the road. Many cases of this nature have occurred among the poor whilst Western Australia was the only colony to which free emigration, at the expense of Government, was carried on.

Australia is known to be an island, and the poor at home who desire to reach its shores seem to have no idea of its enormous extent; but to fancy that, if once landed in any one of its settlements, they may easily transfer themselves, at no great expense, to any other colony to which they desire to proceed. I cannot but think that much self-deception upon this point is allowed to exist among the English poor, and that the country agents of the Emigration Commissioners take no pains to counteract

their ignorance. Even amongst well-educated persons, I have found much surprise to be excited when I have spoken, since my return, of the great difficulty of visiting any of the other colonies from Swan River. The fact is, that the very lowest passage money from Fremantle to Adelaide, the nearest Australian port, is six pounds, and that as no steamboats whatever ply on the coast the voyage must be made in a sailing vessel, of perhaps 250 tons burden, and may last a fortnight or three weeks.

These facts are but little known at home, and the poor fancy that, when arrived at Government cost in West Australia, they will be able, by the savings accruing from a week's work, to make their way to any other part of the continent in which they may have friends or relations, amongst whom they wish finally to settle. When these people, unwarned at home, land in the colony and find out their mistake—find that they are, as it were, *compelled* to remain for years in a place where they had intended to spend only months—they are naturally angered and wrathful, and the consequence is that they learn to hate and abuse the place from the very first, and when they have succeeded at last in getting away to Sydney or Melbourne, they spread an evil report of Swan River amongst all their fellow-artisans.

The excuse made by emigration agents for not having published freely all the disadvantages of the colony, is the following. They say that free emigrants were clamorously demanded during the era of transportation, and that it was not their business to deter people from accepting the Government offer of a free passage, a boon which they could get nowhere else. They would also say that wages

were good in Swan River, and that there was a fair chance for all who were willing to work. It is needless to refer to the past, and now that transportation has ceased the whole aspect of the case is altered; but I would ask those who know the colony well to say whether it is not the truth that the great majority of the respectable labouring and artisan classes who have been sent out as free emigrants during the last ten years has left the colony for Melbourne and Adelaide, and carried an evil report of its prospects away also?

Since we landed, in December 1863, several important additions to the public buildings have been made, which have much improved the general appearance of the town. Of these the new Town Hall deserves the first mention. It is a fine building, upward of 170 feet in length by 80 feet in breadth, accommodating two thousand persons. It is constructed upon arches, so that the basement may form a market-place, a convenience much wanted previously, and it is surmounted by a tower 130 feet in height, and of an ornamental character. As far as it was possible to form a just opinion upon a building still in progress when we left the colony, this new hall seemed likely to add much to the aspect of the town, the tower especially promised to be very effective in the more distant view when approaching from Guildford or Fremantle by the road.

During the last year or two a handsome church has been erected by the Wesleyan body, which is now, I believe, completed and opened. It is described as having a very church-like and graceful exterior, with a lofty, though light spire, and good windows, so that it must

form another welcome addition to the general appearance of the capital. One cannot but hope that, before many more years pass by, an effort may be made by the members of the Church of England to erect a building a little less barn-like than their present cathedral, which must, I fear, present but a poor contrast to the new tower of the Roman Catholic, and the graceful spire of the Wesleyan church, if the latter building be indeed as elegant as the description given of it in the Perth newspapers, which we have received since we left the colony, would lead us to believe.

CHAPTER III.

Journey through bush to Barladong — Road party — Sympathy of our driver — Runaway sailors — Singular sound of wind passing through shea-oak trees — Crossing Darling Range at Green Mount — Extensive and beautiful view — Inn at Mahogany Creek — Australian magpie — Burning of team of horses and load of sandalwood by bush-fire — "V" hut in bush — Grass-trees or Xanthorrhœas — Inn at the Lakes — Remain for the night — Sofa bedsteads — Journey resumed — Early start — Great heat — Paper bark-trees — Little inn among zamias, and red gum-trees — Kangaroo dogs and kangaroo breakfast — First sheep seen feeding forty miles from Perth — Poisonous plants — Change in character of forest — White gum-trees — Curious lizard — Descent of Cut Hill — View of Mount Bakewell — Arrive at Barladong — Description of Church and Parsonage — Deaf Clerk's welcome — Early call for sick visiting — Melancholy noise of curlews in the middle of the night.

We were now becoming anxious to turn our steps towards our new home, which was appointed to be at Barladong* —"over the hills," as the country eastward of Perth is generally called, on account of the road thither crossing the Darling Range at Green Mount. Our future residence was only sixty miles from Perth; but the journey, when undertaken with one horse, required two days to accomplish. My husband had set out some little time before me, leaving me to follow him with our maid-servant. She and I travelled in a hired dog-cart, driven of course by a convict, though the only circumstance that made me guess what he had been was the pitying manner in which he

* For reasons which will be readily understood when the limited character of the population of the colony is considered, I have preferred to use the native rather than the colonial name of the district.

spoke of the "poor fellows" as we passed a road party; an amiable way, at all events, of betraying his origin. The objects of his sympathy looked so very lazy and sulky as they sat together breaking stones, that my compassion was chiefly spent upon the warder, whose duty it was to stand watching them, and I could not help thinking that it would be pleasanter to break the stones oneself, than to have the officer's occupation. The road at this place was deep with sand, so that for a long distance we could only go at a foot's pace, but that was six years ago, and the warders and convicts between them have since then made it more fit for fast travelling.

The whole of our journey lay through forest, except when passing the clearings near and around the town of Guildford, which is ten miles from Perth; after that the wilderness closed in on us again, and the road became so lonely that I fancy I can recall to mind every group which we encountered in the remaining fifty miles. In spite of our seeing so few persons, I felt some surprise that our driver should be able to furnish me with the history of nearly all of them; but a short residence in the colony seemed to put me on a par with him in this kind of information; the list of the names of its principal inhabitants being as easily acquired and remembered, as that of one's fellow-residents in a not over-large English parish.

The first wayfarers whom we met were two handcuffed prisoners, on foot, but accompanied by a mounted policeman, who was walking his horse for their benefit. My maid recognized the manacled pair as a couple of sailors from our ship, who had, it seems, taken French leave, and run away from their work of unloading the cargo. Yet a few

miles farther, and a doctor rode rapidly by, to attend upon a man who had been that morning crushed under a load of sandalwood. Our driver, having already picked up the news of the accident during a short stoppage that we made at Guildford, appeared much interested in the contents of a case which was slung round the doctor's neck, opining that "he has got his instruments."

The man of medicine was in the right to urge on his horse whilst he could do so with a safe conscience, for we, following in his track, soon found ourselves upon another sand plain, across which lay the long and disheartening perspective of our road, stretching in a perfectly straight line of some two or three miles, through every step of which the sand lay fetlock deep. Had the time of year been winter, our slow pace would have been fully compensated by the greater leisure afforded us for observing the exquisite flowers which at that season would have adorned these sandy tracts, though, irrespective of flowers, it must not be supposed that a sand plain in Western Australia invariably represents the bare and naked waste which the name implies to English ears. Many sand plains, it is true, look wild enough, with patches of low growing scrub, varied only with the gaunt stems of Xanthorrhœa, and a few weird shea-oaks destitute of leaves, between whose fine countless twigs, doing duty for foliage, the air sighs in passing with the sound as of a distant railway train, and mocks the sense of hearing in much the same manner as a mirage of water deceives the eye in the deserts of other lands. But on the plain that I am describing, our view, though no longer hemmed in with tall trees, was often much blocked with brushwood, amongst which prevailed

largely a very graceful kind of broom, interspersed with Banksias from twelve to fourteen feet in height, whose bottle-brush shaped blossoms were now maturing into large amber-coloured cones. Without this vegetation, however, we might have fancied that the sandy flat over which we were crawling was the head of an estuary, to be overflowed with the next spring-tide, and that the Darling Range before us was an existing boundary line betwixt sea and land.

At the foot of Green Mount, where a road party had already commenced the solid causeway which at the present day puts such imaginings to flight, the sand mercifully came to an end, and we got out of the dog-cart to relieve our horse by walking up the steep ascent. The nearer that I reached the summit of the mount, the greater became my admiration of the scenery that lay around me. On every side as far as the eye could reach it was all green forest, excepting in one direction where the sea lay dimly upon the remote horizon, and a thin shining light revealed the course of the Swan. The beautiful round masses of tree-tops upon which we looked down were varied only by sunshine and cloud shadows, with here and there the rising smoke of a bush-fire; the oneness of the scene being so complete, that strange to say, it recalled the idea of standing on the deck of a ship and seeing nothing but water all around. Close at hand, and descending steeply to a valley filled with broken fragments, was a bold mass of rock, some twelve or fifteen feet in height, off which a man sprang in the early days of the colony, with a spear in his back, when escaping from a party of natives who disputed his first attempt at driving cattle over the

mount. A poor young fellow, acting as herd-boy on the occasion, was killed. The fugitive was doubly fortunate, as he not only reached the rough ground with his bones uninjured, but stumbled upon a humane old native in the stony valley who drew the spear out of his wound.

Two or three miles beyond this colonially historic point brought us to a stopping-place called Mahogany Creek, where a little inn stands by the wayside. The sun was so powerful that it was a comfort to get underneath the long trellissed pathway, arched over with vines, which led up to the door, where an Australian magpie was playing, which bit my poor dog as we went in. This bird's hatred to dogs was surpassed only by her aversion to children, the sight of whom in an approaching vehicle would at any time bring her flying from a distance to be ready on the offensive at the moment of their alighting. Such conduct in her pet hurt the landlady's feelings, as evincing a heartless disregard for the interests of the hostelry, and the last time that I asked after poor Mag, I was told that she had been got rid of on that account.

The business of the lark as harbinger of morning devolves in Australia upon the magpies, which on this account are commonly called "break-of-day birds." Their song is like the playing of a very soft flute, and when one thinks of the painful effect upon the nerves of being awakened by a discordant or violent noise, there appears an extreme beneficence in the sweetness of tone which has been everywhere imparted to those whose office it is to arouse creation in general. The magpies sing through the day also, and especially towards evening, and it would be difficult to imagine sounds more soothing than

are their notes in the bush just half an hour before sundown. The plumage of the bird is black and white, the feathers being a trifle fuller and more abundant than those of his English relations, though he does not carry his tail in their jaunty fashion; nor, as far as I am aware, is he of any use in augury.

Around and above the little inn, upon a steep bank, grew mahogany trees of a great size, easily distinguished from another kind of eucalyptic tree, commonly called in the colony the red gum, which in some points they resemble, by the peculiar growth of their bark, which is wreathed in curved lines about their trunks.

In this spot the word "creek" meant only a valley, at the bottom of which ran a stream where the landlady's little daughter told me that the emus had come to drink in one very dry season, when thirst conquered their shyness and their dread of venturing near men's habitations. A short distance beyond the creek we came upon a turn of the road to which a melancholy interest has been since attached, by the burning at that spot of four horses with their load of sandalwood in a February bush-fire. In that month, which corresponds to August in the north, the dryness of the Western Australian forest has reached its culminating point, and the sight of trees on fire is so much of an every-day matter as to excite little attention, unless the conflagration should spread very much, so as to encroach upon sheep-runs or endanger homesteads.

Amongst the few exports from the colony sandalwood is one of the chief, and during part of the year heavy teams, high laden with precious logs, are continually

dragging in weary file from the eastward to the sea-coast, whence much of the wood is shipped for China, there to be burnt as incense in joss houses. On the day of the accident to which I have alluded, no fewer than nine teams were close on the heels of each other at this point of the road, whither a fire was rapidly approaching; but a wide thoroughfare is generally a sure barrier to such flames, and the travellers all passed safely with their loads, excepting the last teamster, who, although the fire was then close to him, saw no reason for supposing that he should not be equally fortunate, when a blazing tree suddenly blockaded the road by falling right across it. He tried to turn his horses on one side, and to make a little circuit in the forest, but the poor frightened animals would not obey, and he could not loose them from their gearings, for the flames were too quick for him. "It took but ten minutes," as his father told us, "and all that remained of the horses was a little heap of white bones by the road-side." The cart and its load were also consumed; nothing in fact was left but the poor man himself, shockingly burnt, especially about the hands.

Not far from the scene of this mournful occurrence we passed a saw-pit where men were hard at work amongst the gigantic mahogany-trees, and a woman with a child in her arms stood at a hut door watching us as we drove by. She seemed to have found what Cowper sighed for—"a lodge in some vast wilderness." The lodge itself would perhaps have pleased the poet less than the wilderness, for bush huts are of the very rudest construction, and those which are called V huts, from their resemblance to the letter V turned upside down, are nothing but thatched

roofs set upon the ground, with perhaps a mud chimney built separately on one end. Sometimes instead of thatch the erection is covered with strips of paper bark. The arrangements beneath this roof, when once made, admit of no capricious alterations; stumps driven into the earth at a greater or lesser height, with boards nailed across them, compose alike both bedstead and table. Some little distance beyond the saw-pits we met three or four men bringing down a little troop of horses to be shipped for the Indian market.

That which most attracted my eyes in this my first journey through the bush, was the very singular-looking tree called "Blackboy" by the colonists, known to botanists as the Xanthorrhœa, or grass-tree. The stem is bare and often quite straight, about ten to fourteen inches in diameter, with a wide-spreading foliage at the top which one must call grass for want of a better name, though it quite as much resembles rushes, on which, in many of the runs, the cattle depend mainly for their food. The last year's crop, if it has not been eaten off, hangs down like a beard, brown and faded, in which state it is used for all descriptions of thatching, whilst the upper part is of a fresh green colour, out of which there often rises a tall slender rod, shaped like a bulrush or a poker, according to the fancy of the beholder.

The "blackboys" vary in height from one foot to twenty, and when seen for the first time, and from a distance, might easily be mistaken for savages dressed up in the traditional wavy head-dress of a South Sea Islander. The colour of the stem is not naturally black, but brown; nevertheless, most of them are so com-

pletely blackened with bush-fires, that they look as much like a piece of stove-piping as can well be imagined. The body of the tree is most curiously formed of shining resinous flakes, which are highly inflammable, and when set alight burn with great brilliancy. If people are passing the night out of doors, they always search for a piece of "blackboy" to kindle their fire with, as it ensures such a speedy blaze; and in the dwelling-houses it is in request not only as a fire-reviver, but even to read by, when, as sometimes happens, a candle is scarcer than a book. I have been told, though I do not know with what truth, that to burn much "blackboy" in a house is very bad for the complexion of its inmates; and I have found that if a flake or two accidentally fall into the hot water which is used for washing clothes, they will be always, here and there, stained with a colour varying from *mauve* to yellow.

We made one more stoppage before reaching our final resting-place for the night, to water our horse at a spring, where an old oven stood solitary, bearing witness that a road party had once encamped beside the water. Now that the day's heat was over, I would willingly have loitered a little on the road, but it was getting so dark amongst the trees that we made the best of our way onwards, and soon after, when the night had set in, we came upon the light of a great fire, and saw the warder of a road party standing on the look-out for an expected ration cart, the advent of which he had hoped for on hearing the sound of our wheels. We had not long passed him, when we began to hear the croaking of a multitude of frogs; a most welcome sound, as it conveyed

intelligence that we had arrived at a large marshy pool called the Lakes, on whose edge stood the little inn which was to be the end of our day's journey. There were two or three fires blazing on the water's brink, showing where some teamsters had drawn up their wagons, and were passing the night out of doors; and a number of kangaroo dogs came barking out of the inn, announcing that we had finished the first thirty miles of our road to Barladong. It was a primitive sort of a house, and in the sitting-room to which I was shown were great sofas, suggesting the idea that they often served for beds. Also there were three thick volumes of a geographical work, containing long extracts from Captain Cook's voyages, which had an air of suitability to the far-off place in which we found ourselves; but I made no acquaintance with them that night, for though we had come so short a distance, we had been more than ten hours upon the road, and, quite tired out, were very glad to get to our beds.

We resumed our journey at six o'clock on the following morning, and we should have been wiser had we set out a full hour earlier, for the heat became very great long before we had finished the nine miles which lay between the Lakes and the inn where we intended to breakfast. Growing beside the pool, and close to the ashes of the teamsters' fires, were the first paper bark-trees that I had ever seen. Their shapes were very picturesque, being much twisted and gnarled; the whiteness of the bark contrasting well with their green foliage, which is close and thick, affording more shade, in spite of the smallness of the leaf, than many other of the Australian trees. In

fact, I now corrected my impression, that she whom I had seen on the previous day had realized the poet's wish. Two-thirds of it she certainly had attained, namely, the "lodge" and the "wilderness," but the "boundless contiguity of shade" which had formed the latter part of his aspiration had not been granted to her. Whatever merits may belong to trees of the eucalyptic kind, that of bestowing shade is not one of them. They reach a great height before throwing out their branches, and the leaves upon these hang straight down from their stalks, so that the rays of the sun penetrate the foliage most unmercifully.

I was very glad when we gained the shelter of the next stopping-place; a little low-roofed inn, amongst towering red gum-trees, beneath which the waving bracts of the zamias, or palms as they are popularly called in the colony, imparted somewhat of a semi-tropical character to the foreground. Here another large party of kangaroo dogs came bounding out, and barking in a manner that appeared quite formidable. I found, however, that they had no worse intention than that of announcing the arrival of customers to the inn, and that the noise answered the purpose of an ostler's bell. The hubbub was appeased by the appearance of the mistress of the house, who came forward to welcome me in kind Irish accents; and the dogs, who now knew better than to overstep their duty, relapsed into silence. They had evidently played their part in providing for my breakfast, for kangaroo figured among the dishes.

Our last halt was to water our horse at a wayside well, called St. Ronan's (whether in honour of the saint, or of Scott's novel, I never knew), where we found one or two

travellers who had stopped for the same purpose as ourselves, but the presence of water had attracted no permanent inhabitants to the spot; and an obsolete brick-kiln which stood hard by added to its loneliness a look of desertion.

A few miles farther brought us to a place called the Six Mile Gulley, where the rains of the previous winter had left an abundant supply of water in a deep channel of granite, and where a cottage with a little farm-yard surrounded by a neatly-made staked fence, appeared amongst the trees. It was the first settled habitation, with the exception of the inns, that we had seen in a distance of fifty miles, for the huts of men who are sawing timber in the bush are almost as unlike permanent residences as are the tents of wandering Arabs. Here also, beneath an acacia of that kind familiarly named the "raspberry jam," because the perfume of the wood when freshly cut resembles that of the preserve, were clustered the only sheep that I had encountered on my journey. The truth is, that but a small proportion of land in this part of Western Australia is fit for sheep, on account of the excessive growth of poisonous plants. In some parts they cover the ground for miles and miles with deadly luxuriance, and it so happened that I had been travelling through one of the worst districts. Where the noxious vegetation is less abundant, the shepherds by dint of incessant care can prevent the sheep from eating it; and I have heard that the lambs of such ewes as have been taught to avoid the poisonous growth show less inclination than others to meddle with it. However, I cannot answer for the truth of this assertion.

There are several sorts of "poison" (as the colonial phrase always goes), but the three most common are, the "berry," the "box," and the "York-road" poison, the last so called from the quantity that grows on that highway, and which makes the utmost watchfulness necessary on the part of the shepherds when sheep are driven upon it. I remember that on one occasion eighty sheep out of one flock died of "poison" upon the York-road, in a journey of only forty miles; and a neighbour of ours lost seventy-four sheep upon his own run in the course of one fortnight. The "box" poison (one of the *Gastralobrum* tribe, I believe) takes its name from a fancied resemblance between the pernicious shrub and the well-known box-tree; and the "berry" poison receives its distinctive title on account of the vast quantities of berries that the plant produces.

The talent for discrimination possessed by pigs in "what to eat, drink, and avoid," enables them to lead, as it were, a charmed life amidst these baleful herbs; in the words of a native, whom I questioned on the subject, "pig smell poison." Neither are horses, speaking generally, affected by the plant, the exceptional cases being so few that they may be considered to prove the rule. On the other hand, cows are frequent victims, and I can recall an instance of eleven cows, the property of one person, being all fatally poisoned whilst grazing together on the same spot.

We had left the sheep under their acacia-tree some two miles behind us, when the scenery became more diversified. The ground now undulated considerably, and a great many white gum-trees, of fantastic shapes, grew on the

high banks and in the valley below us. The forest had never really ceased since we left Perth, but it had twice assumed a change in character, and was now exhibiting a third. The first part of our way, with the exception of the sand plains, had been bordered almost exclusively with mahoganies, which by degrees became fewer, leaving red gum-trees predominant; and these latter, with their rough and rusty-coloured bark, were now in their turn giving place to another kind of eucalyptics, white and ghost-like, and as smooth as though they had been scraped on purpose, or deprived of their bark for the tanner. In fact, on seeing these bark-shedding trees for the first time, a young friend of mine supposed that they had been actually subjected to some kind of artificial treatment. Probably an Australian aboriginal, suddenly introduced to a European forest in its winter condition, would equally think that the trees had been expressly stripped of their leaves. The white trunks of some of the trees were so much flecked with dark-brown spots as to remind me of a panther's coat; and just at this part of our road I saw a lizard spotted brown and white, precisely in the same manner as the trees; I therefore concluded that it was of a sort that lived amongst them, and was shielded by its colour from the notice both of its enemies and of its own prey.

On reaching the top of a rather steep ascent called Cut Hill, we came in view of a bold mountain-shaped ridge running towards the north-east, and swelling upwards from the wide forest plain which stretched away before us into the distance. Mount Bakewell, as the highest part of the ridge is named, appeared to me of much the

same elevation as the Worcestershire Beacon; but here the resemblance ceased, both the mount itself and the whole line of hills being thickly wooded, which the Malvern Hills are not. A turn in our descent of Cut Hill brought in sight the ridge of Mount Douraking, of somewhat lower height than Mount Bakewell, though of a shape more wild and craggy, the top being surmounted by tall trees, which had struggled up amongst heaps of broken granite, and forced their way through the abrupt stony slopes wherever they could find a footing. On perceiving shortly afterwards one or two small houses in the valley, and a round building with a peaked roof, out of which rose a weathercock, I thought that we must be approaching a village of some kind, and my driver informed me that we had at length reached Barladong. How to find our own house now became my difficulty, less on account of the number of the dwellings than because there appeared to be nobody of whom to ask a question. On the other hand, in accordance with the dignity of a town that ranks third in the colony, there was no deficiency of public edifices, for, on proceeding a little way farther, we beheld five or six built of red brick, and all placed at wide intervals from one another, as if in hopes of inducing people to fill up the gaps with private houses.

None of the buildings, however, made any pretence to the picturesque, excepting the round one with the weathercock, which I afterwards heard had been erected as a windmill by an American, possibly after some hazy model preserved in his youthful recollections of the many old Dutch-patterned structures in his own land. Meanwhile a pitiless January sun was beating down upon us,

and our state of perplexity was presently increased by arriving at a point where two ways meet. We turned to the left at a venture, and were soon relieved by the welcome apparition of a man in a helmet-hat standing in front of a little store. Our driver's request that the stranger would point out the way to the "Protestant church" seemed to me a vague mode of seeking for information; but, owing perhaps to the number of Irish that have settled in Western Australia, the word Protestant is generally accepted there as a synonym of the Church of England, and I even found that a dog, who habitually followed his master to church, had received the complimentary name of "the Protestant" in consequence. Being properly directed by our helmeted friend, to whom the form of my driver's question was apparently quite natural, we went on towards a wooden bridge which crossed a tributary of the Swan, called the Avon, upon which Barladong is situated. The great length and height of the bridge told a tale of heavy floods, but the river was in its summer condition, and, except in one spot, where there lay a narrow pool of still water, the timbers spanned only brushwood and sand. The centre piers must have been very nearly 30 feet high; nevertheless, I learned that the stream had overflowed the handrail of the bridge only two winters before.

Halfway across the bridge we met my husband coming out to meet us, fearing that we had been detained by some disaster. He turned back with us, and we passed a few detached houses, and an open space of ground which had been laid out years ago for a street, to part of which the bush was once more asserting its right. On one side

of the long bare thoroughfare stood a red brick church (or more correctly speaking, the nave of one), which looked as if it had originally been intended to contain four or five hundred people. A blank arch constructed in the east wall gave token that the amateur designers had contemplated the addition of a chancel at some future date, to which the arch, when opened, would have formed the entrance. Apparently no sufficient increase of population had yet occurred to render this expansion of size advisable, neither had the tower, evidently required to complete the west end, yet been built, so that the nave stood alone, bearing a painful resemblance to a barn. There was not even a bell-gable to break the uniformity of the roof; but the congregation was called together by the ringing of a bell which hung in a tall gum-tree in the churchyard.

The parsonage was not far from the church, and stood in the middle of its own glebe field of nine acres, surrounded by straight rows of split posts and rails, after the hedgeless fashion of Australia. There seemed to be no regular entrance-gate into the field; but we found our way in by taking a couple of movable rails out of the notches made in two of the posts to facilitate their removal. This awkward contrivance is called a "slip rail," and is universally resorted to in all cases where the absence of carpenters of sufficient skill to manufacture proper gates renders some such substitute necessary. Such houses "over the hills" as are approached by neat and well-made gates gain almost as much importance from the fact as would, in England, be conferred by the possession of an entrance-lodge.

We now entered our future residence, which was built somewhat upon the model of an Indian bungalow, being low and long and thickly thatched, and surrounded on all four sides by a verandah, formed by the continuation of the roof itself, until its eaves came to within seven feet of the ground. The rooms were but four in number, standing side by side in the same straight line, and all opening both into one another and into the verandah outside, so that no room had less than two doors, while the two middle rooms had of course three each. Advantage had been taken of the verandah to add a little more accommodation to the very small house, in the shape of four little chambers, each eight feet square, contrived at its four external corners by a rough continuation of the walls of the house. These little closets or cells were intended for pantry, larder, and so forth, but the addition of a door and window to two of them rendered it possible to introduce a small camp bedstead and one chair, in case an extra sleeping room was required.

The walls of the house were built of "pug," which means simply well-pounded mud, and has the disadvantage of refusing to adhere firmly to the frames of doors and casements, so that the banging of either, in windy weather, is apt to bring large pieces of the material crumbling down, and the house never looks tidy. Moreover, as we soon found out, no matter how neatly these walls may be finished by the plasterer, to paper them properly is all but impossible. The strongest paste in the deftest hands will not always suffice to cement the paper so firmly as that it and the wall shall not soon show signs of parting company, and in one of our rooms we could

only keep the paper from falling forwards by nailing a strip of tape tightly along the edge close under the ceiling. The ceilings, when there are any to these mud houses, are made of strong unbleached calico, and, on account of the ventilation that it admits, a calico ceiling is much pleasanter than one of plaster in a warm climate. On rough nights, however, the wind that finds its way beneath the rafters keeps drawing up and down the cotton ceiling in sudden gusts, and if the fastenings of your canopy are not very artfully contrived, one end or other of it is sure to give way after a time, and hang dependent in a melancholy manner. Our sitting and sleeping rooms were all ceiled with calico, but the kitchen was open up to the thatched rafters, and, by way of compensation for the undraped condition of these, both rafters and thatch were festooned with hanging nests of puddled clay, looking somewhat as if they belonged to a colony of swallows. The proprietors, however, were not birds, but of the race of mason-hornet, properly called a sphex; and as they had a fancy for building their nests exactly over our heads, it was well for us that only one of the clay tenements ever fell down, which it did one day with a sounding crash upon an empty tray upon the kitchen table.

After glancing my eyes around me for a few moments after my arrival, I should have been truly glad if some one had had the forethought to light the kitchen fire, and provide a kettle of hot water for tea; but on looking at the hearth I saw that all was as bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard, and when I turned quickly to an old man in charge of the house, who was wandering about in his shirt sleeves, and asked "Where's the firewood?"

his only reply was a slow hoarse whisper of "Welcome to Barladong." The person who thus greeted me was an exceedingly deaf old clerk and sexton who had once been a soldier, and was now one of the numerous pensioners that have been drafted off to Western Australia to serve, in place of regular troops, as a protection to the colonists in case of outbreaks from the convicts. He had lost his hearing in a manner singular enough, from a fall down a hatchway during rough weather at sea, and would perhaps have lost his life at the same time if his head had not come in collision with another man's foot, which while breaking the fall was itself broken by the blow.

Having succeeded at last in making the poor old fellow understand what I wanted, he commenced lighting the fire with an alacrity which bespoke the sincerity of the welcome that he had given me; but just at that moment a wagon appeared with our goods from Perth, and we postponed all thoughts of tea until we should have finished unpacking, for the driver confessed to an overturn upon the road, and we wished to know the worst at once, expecting to find every frangible article broken. Things were not so bad as we feared, and even my walnut whatnot, which was brought piecemeal out of the wagon, had fortunately come asunder at its original joinings only. Meanwhile anxiety as to the fate of other movables proved as good a stimulant to me as the tea which I had hoped for, and, tired as I had been an hour before, I now continued helping my husband to arrange our house until ten o'clock at night, when we both went to bed thoroughly weary.

We were not destined to enjoy a long repose, for we

were aroused in less than an hour by a rapping at the front door, which turned out to be a messenger to say that the old sexton had been taken ill, and that his wife wanted the parson to come immediately to see him. My husband got up, and went at once with the messenger, but he did not remain away very long; he found the old man in bed, and complaining of cramp and spasms, for which his wife looked upon brandy as the only useful remedy, and begged very hard for some for him. This was clearly her only motive for sending for the parson; but my husband desired one of the company to return with him, to be furnished with a strong mustard plaster instead, about which he felt sure that there would be no crying of halves, nor any attempt to dispute the patient's sole enjoyment of it, and so came away, leaving the rest of the women around the sick bed looking very blank at the failure of their first endeavour to hoodwink the newcomer. We did not, however, believe that the poor old man had anything to do with the plot upon the spirit bottle, as he was really suffering. Once more we were falling into sound sleep when we were awakened by the most dismal wailings imaginable, shrieked out, apparently, by some creature just over the roof. It was a flock of curlews on their way to the river, but until I became used to the cry, as I did in time from its frequency, it impressed me with such a sense of melancholy that I could not feel surprised when I heard a native speak of them as "Jingy birds," that is, Satan's birds, Jingy being the name of the evil spirit, the only divinity confessed to in the poor native Australian's creed.

CHAPTER IV.

Description of Parsonage House — Multiplicity of doors — Verandahs the only passage from room to room — Difficulty in procuring necessary fittings — First visit to a country store — Beauty of native mahogany flooring if properly kept — Pensioners and wives — Convict depôts in country districts — Depôt at Barladong — Clocks and cocks — Climate in summer — Favourite riding-horse — Visits from the natives — Appearance and character of Khourabene — Difficulties as to dress — Habits of exchanging all things with each other — Native's duties towards strangers — Love of dogs among the natives — Behaviour to the women — Matrimonial quarrel near Parsonage — "Bollia" men, or conjurors — Cruel custom of avenging a death — Native grave — Natives very trustworthy as messengers — Ned sent to carry letter — His behaviour to his wife — Pepper-tea and sham poisoning — Use of grease and fat on the skin — Old Isaac's amusement at a lady's riding-hat — Red earth or Wilghee used as ornament — Native dandy dressing himself for a dance — Khourabene's suit of mourning.

AFTER a good night's rest we commenced a thorough examination of our new premises, in order that we might arrange the house in the most comfortable manner. It would at first seem that, as we had but four rooms to puzzle over, it ought not to have given us much trouble to decide which should be kitchen, which parlour, and which sleeping apartments. Matters, however, are not so simple as might naturally be expected when the interior arrangements of a rough colonial house are in question, since so many points must be considered which could never occur in England. First, the floors; are they wood, mud, or brick? In our house we had specimens of all three kinds. Next comes the question of aspect; will the afternoon sun find too much entrance, so as to make the

room overpoweringly hot? Then as to the number of doors in the room; if it is to be a bed-room, will it be a necessary passage room to any of the others? All these things must be carefully considered before coming to a decision, or else perpetual discomfort will be sure to follow.

Our four rooms all opened into one another, and into the verandah also, as I have already noticed, and there were no passages whatever inside the house. The kitchen was paved roughly with brick, and we were at first much puzzled to conceive what good purpose could be served by a strange red-brick enclosure, about seven feet square, and open at top, which filled up one of its corners. On inquiry we discovered that it was meant for a maid-servant's bed-room.

At the opposite end of the house there was one good-sized room, which had always been used as the sitting-room, and between it and the kitchen were two narrow rooms opening into each other, and into the verandah as well, so that in one of them there were three, and in the other four doors, though some of them were glass doors doing duty for windows. It was thus not an easy matter to decide whether it would be better to sacrifice appearance to comfort by taking the one large room for our bed-room, and contriving two little sitting-rooms out of what were in reality narrow thoroughfares, or whether we should follow the example of our predecessors by retaining the spacious apartment for our parlour, and making shift with one of the uncomfortable rooms for our dormitory. We decided upon the former plan, which secured to us a most cheerful and pleasant sleeping-room, and we

also managed, by means of a few alterations, to make a pretty little sitting-room out of the chamber next the kitchen, though its brick floor was always a nuisance, as it cut our Indian matting to pieces almost as fast as it was laid down.

As the rooms all faced east and west, we were exposed to the full blaze of the afternoon sun, as soon as it was low enough for its beams to pass under the verandah, which was at about three o'clock. Blinds were therefore articles of immediate necessity, and I resolved to lose no time in going to one of the stores to procure them. The stores lay on the side of the river which was opposite to us; but during the dry season we were under no necessity of crossing the bridge. Our nearest way at that time of year was over the bed of the Avon, which even when dry has its own peculiar beauties, though they differ from those of river scenery at home. There are nooks shaded by the paper bark, and wide grassy spots, with permanent water holes intervening, around which the cattle love to congregate during the mid-day heat. Some of the pools are mere duck-ponds; others are fine stretches of water, half a mile in length and very deep, and these are generally contained between steep banks covered with brushwood and topped by high trees, which cast the reflections of their long arms over the smooth placid water beneath. Again perhaps the river bed will widen, and its banks will become lower, and you may come to large sandy tracts which, a few months before, were covered by the winter floods, but are now so dry and bare that cricketers select them as convenient spots for the purpose of playing out a match.

The store which we now entered was the first which I had seen "over the hills," and was a good average specimen of similar emporiums in the country districts. On one side of the shop, where the grocery was sold, there stood a heavy weighing-machine and a tub of salt fish; crockery, gown-pieces, paraffin lamps, and woollen goods were ranged on the shelves; boots, reaping-hooks, coats, kettles, hanks of twine, and common tin-ware dangled from the rafters; camp-ovens and iron saucepans lumbered the floor; and under a glass-case was a dowdy little collection of millinery and fancy goods, the last worthy of their name only from the prices which were attached to them, whilst as to the millinery, I may here say in parenthesis, that I never saw any, even in the best colonial stores, which looked as if it could have come from any quarter more fashionable than the Edgware Road.

Of books there was a shelf containing eleven copies of M. Thiers' 'History of the French Revolution,' bought by the store-keeper in a "job lot," and originally published at ten shillings, but now offered for sale at one guinea apiece. This, however, might have inspired us with the encouraging thought that the colonists were so fond of reading that they were ready to pay any price for books; but we were damped by finding that whereas M. Thiers' works were only ticketed at twice their value, the cost of many necessary articles of daily use was fixed at a still higher rate.

But the mysteries of stores and store-keeping in Western Australia were not to be fathomed in a single visit; they were such as could only be revealed by time accompanied with dear-bought experience. I found that it was

an easier matter to purchase my blinds than to decide in what manner they could be hung up with advantage. Of course my natural instincts led me to hope for wooden rollers and side cords, but I soon found that I must moderate my desires, and content myself with such contrivances as could be devised by my own ingenuity. Some of my neighbours nailed the blinds to the window frame, pinning them up when not in use; others suspended them curtain-wise upon a string; but rollers and cord were luxuries as seldom seen "over the hills" as gates, and it was the same with other kinds of "house fittings."

Lord Mansfield, who objected to bells on the ground that it was a servant's duty "to wait," would have found no bells to object to, nor any servants with leisure to stand expectant; casements were fastened with wooden buttons, for bolts were not furnished by the stores, and in the poorer sort of houses the windows were not glazed, but consisted simply of a wooden frame on which was stretched strong calico. All these little roughnesses were, however, more than compensated by the superb beauty of the climate, which, taken together with the primitive appearance of our carpetless dwelling, conveyed the impression to the mind of perpetually living in a garden-house for the summer season.

I found that those residences, of which the superiority was attested by a good entrance-gate, were generally dignified in addition by containing one carpeted room, but carpets were less in keeping with the summer's heat than matting, and oil-cloth was better than either in the wet season, when people were apt to bring in the mud of the roads upon their boots. There is, however, no

question that the native mahogany, with which rooms are always boarded in Swan River, if they are so fortunate as to be boarded at all, would be the handsomest flooring of any, provided that it was kept bright with constant rubbing. The colonists would probably take fright at the idea of the labour involved in keeping up a polished floor, but if the French fashion of fastening brushes to the feet of the floor cleaner was adopted, all difficulties would be obviated.

On one of our floors we pursued the plan of polishing the mahogany with beeswax, and the effect resembled that of the finest old dark oak. I soon discovered that the practice was unusual, by observing the extreme interest with which one of my visitors regarded its results; and her explanation that the polished boards "reminded her of Windsor Castle," sounded to us as the best instance that we had ever heard of *lucus a non lucendo.* But absurd as it seemed to us, there was reason for what she said. As a child she had lived in the town of Windsor, and until that moment she had never seen a bright floor since certain well-remembered peeps that she had had of the apartments in the Castle, in virtue of the employment that her father had held as one of George the Third's domestics. Windsor traditions were still dear to her, and one of her Australian-born children had been christened Amelia, in memory of the old king's favourite daughter.

We had now taken sufficient time to "turn ourselves round," as the old phrase goes, within doors, and we next proceeded to apply the same gyratory process to our outward premises, though what connection self-rota-

tion should have with the endeavour to settle down in a new home, I could never understand, in spite of the antiquity of the expression. The garden was naturally our first object of interest, and I found that it was much indebted to its original clerical possessor, who had planted it with a number of pomegranates and fig-trees. Also, no doubt in the laudable desire of planting the British flag upon a foreign shore, he had planned the beds and walks of his flower garden in the form of a Union Jack; but though I trust that I am not a bad subject, I must own that I felt less obliged to him for the flower beds than for the fruit trees, as the national ensign took up a much larger space of ground than my own pair of hands could ever hope to keep neat.

Our vineyard had been, most unfortunately, placed on a bit of the stiffest clay which the garden afforded, whilst plenty of sand, in which vines would have flourished, lay comparatively idle in our glebe-field close adjoining. As to out-buildings, we were very badly off. There was neither pig-stye, cow-house, nor poultry-yard, and the only apology for a stable was a remnant of an old shed open to every shower which might fall. It was clear that we should have to supply all these deficiencies at our own cost, but before commencing operations we determined that we would give a look at our neighbours' premises, and learn in what manner farm-buildings might be inexpensively erected. The nearest models in our immediate vicinity were found in the little farm-yards belonging to some of the pensioners to whom I have already referred. These men have been employed as guards in the convict ships, and, on their arrival, have

received grants of land and other advantages; but it is well known that soldiers are not famous as colonists, and amongst the many pensioners who lived near us, only two or three, whose wives were exceptional patterns of industry and thrift, could give us any counsel in our farming, or had been able to make any profit out of their own. The younger and still able-bodied pensioners who compose what is called the "Force," are envied by the older and less useful men on account of the extra pay which they receive whilst thus enrolled. In return for this additional stipend, the members of the "Force" must hold themselves in readiness to assist in all emergencies, such as extinguishing fires upon Government property, re-capturing runaway prisoners, mounting guard at the several gaols, and the like services. Between pensioners and convicts existed a very rancorous feeling, originating no doubt in the relative positions occupied by the two classes on board ship; the convicts protesting that the pensioners were quite as bad as themselves, only that they had not been found out, an assertion no ways weakened by the drunken habits in which some of the old soldiers were apt to indulge, and by the very low character of the women that many of them had married.

The convict depôt from which our little town derived its chief importance, was situated in the close vicinity of the pensioners' houses. At irregular intervals throughout the colony depôts of this kind are scattered, to which convicts are drafted after serving a portion of their sentence in the Fremantle gaol. On being thus transferred from the gaol to the depôt, convicts, who are then "probation prisoners," are distributed in gangs to work upon

the roads of the district in which the depôt is situated. Beside furnishing menders of the highway, the depôts supply the place of "mops" or "statutes" for the hiring of farm labourers, and also serve as register offices for servants and tutors, according to the exigencies of the colonists, and the professed capacity of those prisoners who are entitled to their ticket-of-leave.

No one would have supposed from the exterior of our convict depôt at Barladong, that its inmates were under any sort of restraint, and, contrary to ordinary precedent in Government work, the architect appeared to have been strongly imbued with the idea of saving space and husbanding brick and mortar. Low white railings surrounded the enclosure instead of high spiked walls, and an out-house that looked like a large lock-up coach-house, and which stood open in the day, was the convicts' common hall and dormitory. The warders' quarters were as miserably cramped as if the bit of desert on which they stood had been rated at a London ground-rent, and the discovery that a district hospital was wanted had resulted in the appropriation for that purpose of an old kitchen, in which apartment both bond and free alike received benefit, but in less degree than would have been conferred on them by larger space and better ventilation. The depôt bell, however, was a public boon without alloy. It swung from a tall slender gallows in the middle of the white-railed yard, and being rung several times a day at stated hours, was as good as a church clock to those who heard it, few of whom had any other way of reckoning time.

Clocks were not only scarce, but in no great request;

those which were supplied by the colonial stores soon ceasing to "go," and subsiding with such rapidity into their secondary purpose of chimney ornaments, that I sometimes doubted whether the clockmakers had not regarded it as the primary one. Thus it came about that on Sundays those people in the bush who lived beyond hearing of the depôt bell, not unfrequently found themselves either half an hour too late or too early for church, as the case might be, and for a child to "know the clock" was rather a mark of superior intelligence.

A grown-up girl once called at our door to ask the time; I referred her to our clock for her own satisfaction, at which she cast a glance as hopeless as that with which she might have regarded some mysterious mathematical instrument, and professed herself in no way the better informed. The inconvenience that resulted from the dearth or the decrepitude of timepieces appeared to have been taken into consideration by the cocks, for they crowed vociferously precisely one hour before midnight, and again at two in the morning; on the last occasion without any reference to dawn in the sky, for the sun did not rise till nearly five o'clock upon the longest day. This peculiarity of the domestic fowl is mentioned in most descriptions of Australia, but in none that I have ever read has any notice been taken of the extreme regularity with which the crowing occurs at certain fixed hours.

I must now beg the reader to suppose us comfortably settled in our new home, or at least as comfortably as it was possible for us to make ourselves in a district where so many of the minor conveniences of life were unprocurable. We had erected three wooden buildings, to serve

as stable, pig-stye, and hen-roost, and had thatched them with rushes which a neighbour allowed us to cut from the "blackboys" on his run. Our horse and cow were bought, and we had been presented with two pigs, and a cock and hen. We had also obtained some insight into the condition and habits of the neighbourhood, so that we felt ourselves at home and at our ease, and able to form a fairly just opinion as to all that went on around us.

As this little sketch does not pretend to be a journal, or to be written in chronological order, but merely to give an account of such things as would be likely to interest those whose home has always been in England, I shall make no apology for the somewhat desultory nature of the following pages, in which I prefer to give the results of our entire experience of the colony, rather than to detail the gradual process by which our acquaintance with West Australia and its inhabitants was ultimately obtained. Perhaps some account of our intercourse with the natives may be of interest to those who have never met with the wild man in his own land; and I may be pardoned if I give a somewhat diffuse history of our earlier intercourse with the tribe belonging to our immediate district, as we met them either in our rides about the bush, or when they paid us a visit at our own home.

At first we had thought that it would be impossible for us to ride or drive during the full heat of the day, and we had marvelled at the impunity with which our more distant neighbours were able to brave the sun when they rode up to our door at two or three o'clock in the afternoon. A very short experience, however, was sufficient to teach us that the clear dry air and exhilarating breezes,

which are the almost invariable adjuncts of the summer of Western Australia, temper the fierce sunbeams so greatly, to anyone in rapid motion, as to render a ride through the bush, even when the glass is at 90° in the shade, by no means disagreeable. A young friend most kindly lent me her favourite riding-horse; it was a lovely grey mare named 'Mercy,' and many a charming forest ride did I enjoy upon her back. When quite a young foal the poor little creature's dam had been killed by an accident, upon which my friend's brother had expressed the opinion that "it would be a mercy to shoot the poor thing." His sister, however, thought that it would be a greater mercy if she could manage to keep it alive, and in spite of fraternal sarcasms she proceeded, like Mr. Chick in 'Dombey and Son,' to try whether "something temporary could not be done with a teapot" to supply immediate wants, whilst trusting to the hope that care and kindness would eventually succeed in rearing the young animal. Whether its kind nurse "took it from the month," or whether more than four weeks had elapsed since its birth, I know not; at all events her pains were well rewarded, for the singularly named 'Mercy' grew up into one of the most delightful lady's horses possible, full of spirit and life, and yet not too eager, and as smooth as a rocking-horse in all its paces.

I have been often asked, since returning to England, whether the Australian native is not the lowest member of the human family—its shabbiest and least creditable relation; and my questioners generally seemed to have made up their minds beforehand that such was certainly the case, let my answer be what it might. Even the

quickness of the poor native's senses is often brought forward against him, as though he were something less than a man, because his acuteness of observation and keenness of sight reach a perfection that we are accustomed to consider as the birthright of the inferior animals alone. Born, however, in a country that is devoid of indigenous fruits or grains fit for man's use, the native's existence has depended not on the cultivation of the soil, but on that of his five senses; and that he should see like a hawk and track like a bloodhound, or should resemble the bee in his power of steering a direct course through pathless forests, are the natural results of that cultivation, just as the excessive delicacy of touch possessed by the hands of blind persons results from the constant exercise of their sense of feeling. But granting that the lowest condition of mankind is to be found on the great island-continent, I can yet assure Europeans that they have no reason to feel ashamed of owning affinity with the savages of Australia West, either in respect of mental qualities or that of manly appearance. The kangaroo mantle, nearly reaching the knee, hangs gracefully over their fine figures; the uncovered head is carried loftily, and a dignity is added to the high, well-shaped forehead by the binding of a fillet round the hair and brow, after the fashion of an antique bust.

The curiosity that is felt with regard to "natives" dates, probably, with most persons, from their first reading of Robinson Crusoe; and Mr. Darwin, who, from what he says in his 'Naturalist's Voyage,' appears to have been by no means a good sailor, considers the opportunity of seeing man in his savage state as a complete counter-

balance to the trials and inconveniences of sea sickness. We, on the other hand, had looked forward to the sight of wild men as the very crowning point of a much-enjoyed voyage; nor did the objects of our curiosity keep us long in suspense, being apparently as anxious to see what we were like, as we were to make their acquaintance.

After we had been settled at Barladong about a fortnight the natives began to pay us frequent visits. We had learned the names of several individuals, but had formed no especial friendships, when one morning a shadow fell across our window, and on looking up to ascertain the cause, we saw a stranger standing in a calm, easy attitude, surveying us from two brilliant eyes, with an expression of pleasure mingled with curiosity. His jet-black hair was bound with a fillet in the mode that I have described, and his features were somewhat of the Malay type; his complexion decidedly black, but not the sooty hue of the negro. Cast over his left shoulder, and brought beneath the opposite arm, hung his mantle of kangaroo skin, the fur worn inside, securely fastened with a long wooden pin like a skewer, whilst in one of his hands, which were small and well-shaped, he held lightly a bundle of slender spears, six or seven feet in length. A twisted string of opossum fur, in which was stuck his tobacco pipe, was wound several times round the upper part of his bare muscular arm, and his cheeks were painted with a red earth, as a lady puts on rouge. It seemed that he was come to make a call of ceremony upon us as his new neighbours, and not being furnished with a card to send in first, he affably became his own introducer, saying, "I Mister Khourabene—you gentleman fellow—I gentleman fellow—I come see you."

Perhaps what struck us most in his manner was the complete taking for granted that he and ourselves were upon precisely the same social level; an idea which we were fain to accept in a complimentary sense, such being evidently the intention of our visitor. He appeared to find us congenial, for after this introduction, his visits to us were constantly repeated whenever he was in the neighbourhood, and as the liking was mutual, and experience had proved him to be thoroughly trustworthy, we habitually employed him about our house in preference to any of his relations.

The native figure and complexion are much set off by dress, and as Khourabene often frequented the parsonage for weeks together, we wished to give him the benefit of bright-coloured clothes which should do justice to his lithe well-knit shape. My husband therefore dressed him in a dark-blue jersey and a pair of white trousers, and Khourabene was delighted with the effect; but at the end of two days both trousers and jersey had disappeared, and a grave silence was all that we could extract from our friend on the subject. We dressed him again, but without more permanent results; in fact, he seemed to wear our livery no longer than until an opportunity should occur for exchanging or giving it away. In his native kangaroo mantle he looked the gentleman savage; in shirt and trousers he had the air of a neat trim black servant; but when left to himself, and allowed to exchange his good clothes for the old rags in which the first native he might meet happened to be arrayed (an exchange which their habits forbade him to decline), he looked as if got up for a scare-crow. Bottled beer had no doubt something to do with the disappearance of the

jersey, which was quite good enough to have excited a white man's envy; but we found that the natives have a law amongst themselves, so stringently compelling them to share their individual possessions with each other, that no one appears long to retain personal ownership of any present that has been made to him.

It is scarcely possible to imagine a stronger exemplification of that community of goods which distinguished the early Christian church, when "neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own," than exists amongst these savages, only with this difference, that the self-abnegation instead of being voluntary is produced by compulsion. If, for instance, we gave food to a native whilst others of his tribe were hanging about the house, he considered that we doubled the favour by contriving an opportunity for him to eat unseen, as otherwise he must of necessity share his dinner with the lookers-on. This law is especially binding with respect to strangers of another tribe, with whom, if friendliness is to be maintained, a native is bound to make an exchange of property however greatly to his own disadvantage. The same article, therefore, is at different times owned by a great variety of persons, as a proof of which I may mention that during our residence in the colony an exploring party found a tin, which had once contained preserved meat, in possession of some natives who had never before seen a white man.

All the better class of colonists in the bush have their favourite natives, who, in return for old clothes and food, which principally consists of flour, will consent to act as cleaners of pots and pans, as well as hewers of wood and

drawers of water. More commonly still, the natives are employed in minding the sheep and lambs, an office for which they are no less fitted by their extraordinary habits of observation than by their quiet gentle manners and their inborn kindness to animals; and when thus employed in the continuous care of a flock these qualities receive recognition in the shape of regular wages, though not in the same proportion as are paid to white men. Sometimes a number of natives will remain many weeks near a homestead, assisting on the farm, and then, as if tired of being any longer in one spot, they will assume the important air of persons whose presence is required at a distance on urgent private affairs, and the whole party will disappear for a longer or shorter period.

It is not to be supposed that people who have neither furniture nor wardrobe to speak of can be much troubled with luggage in flitting, but of such as there is the ladies are compelled to be the porters; and what with bundles of flour and supernumerary fur mantles, one often meets the poor women bent almost double with their burdens, which they always carry on their backs. At all times an opossum-skin wallet between the shoulders, or under one arm, is an indispensable female appendage, where sits the baby if there is one, peeping out of the fur lining. The other children, generally quite naked, run beside the mother; whilst the father of the family, his head thrown slightly back, and a few spears in his hand, paces leisurely along in front of the party with all the dignity of a king. A child is sometimes carried astride on its parent's shoulders. I once saw a youngster sitting thus, who steadied himself by clutching his mother's hair tightly

with one hand whilst the other held a bone which he was very diligently gnawing.

The rear of the wayfarers is often brought up by several dogs, whose lean and bony appearance gives little token of the strong affection with which their masters really regard them. The Australian dotes upon his dogs, and never destroys a puppy; but, nevertheless, he will not insult the high intelligence of his four-footed friends, by supposing that they are not equal to the task of finding their own living. The dogs are careful not to disappoint his good opinion of them, and prowl about at night like jackals, robbing all insecure larders, and even the vineyards when grapes are in season. In hopes of abating this nuisance, the colonial authorities have established a dog-tax, which the white population pays, and which the natives for the most part elude altogether.

No native ever encamps unless within easy reach of water, and if huts are wanted the women must build them. They are made of boughs, the roofs round-shaped, too low to stand upright in, with the entrance carefully turned away from the wind; and if the wind shifts in the night some one, again a lady I should presume, has to get up to alter the position of the doorway. In front of each hut a fire is lighted, so that the feet of those who are sleeping within shall be kept warm; and if a relation's death has lately occurred, an additional and solitary fire is lighted at a little distance from the huts, where the ghost of the deceased may sit and warm itself without disturbing the family hearth. Warmth is, in fact, so great a necessity to the native, that he seems to think that the dead can only by degrees become accus-

tomed to the want of it, and the airing of a grave by kindling a fire within it is a very important ceremony at a funeral. The same love of warmth creates an aversion to early rising, and natives are seldom seen abroad until the sun has been one or two hours above the horizon.

In wet weather it is usual to carry in the hand, beneath the kangaroo skin, a piece of smouldering wood, which compensates in some sort for the want of a flannel waistcoat, and enables them to light a fire at a moment's notice. Khourabene also had a plan on cold nights of lying down, rolled up in his furs, upon the ashes of a raked-out fire. He explained to my husband, who once very nearly fell over him outside our house where he had tucked himself up in this manner for the night, that the advantage of thus going to bed was twofold, being no less good for warmth than for concealment, especially when passing the night in a strange place, where the keeping up of a fire after dark might attract the notice of unfriendly natives. Each tribe possesses a territory of its own, and each family of the tribe has its own especial tract of land within that territory, together with the springs of water thereupon; here he can light his fire and build his hut without fear of molestation; it is in fact his paternal estate, so that the word "fire" conveys to an Australian the same meaning of fatherland or birth-place as the European idiom of "hearth," * and is used by the aborigines in the same sense.

The Australian women are less good-looking than the men, partly perhaps because amongst a thick-lipped race

* I am indebted for this information to Bishop Salvado's 'Memorie Storiche dell' Australia.'

the possession of beard and moustaches is useful in concealing homely features, and also because the state of extreme subjection in which the women are kept by their husbands does not tend to beautify them. The poor drudges are severely beaten for the slightest fault, not to mention that they are sometimes, as a native expressed it to me, "little bit speared"; but this I fancy is always with a view to reformation, as in case of capital offences it becomes the husband's duty to spear his wife so that death ensues. However, in a matrimonial quarrel that occurred close to our house, Khourabene, as third party, persuaded the husband to act in a manner both philosophical and conciliatory. A violent altercation had sprung up one night amongst a party of natives that were encamped near us, the dispute being followed with screams and yells such as only black women's lungs seem to have the secret of producing; and as these sounds were plainly accompanied by others that resembled the breaking of a stick, I called to Khourabene, who was eating his supper in the kitchen, and dispatched him in the direction of the uproar, with a message from ourselves that the discipline must be suspended. He started off at a run, supper and beer in his hands (the tin pannikin, be it observed, was deep, and not over full), and the yells soon gave place to a loud talking, as if each individual in the company was giving a different version of the affair at one and the same moment. To this Babel succeeded a dead stillness, followed by the re-appearance of my ambassador, evidently much pleased with the result of his interference and the superior judgment which he had displayed. "Womany drunk," he said with an air of

careless dignity; "I tell him let her *wonga*" (*i. e.* talk) —"morning all right."

Of religion the natives appear to possess but the merest rudiments, and no forms of worship whatever—unless their manner of propitiating the bad spirit Jingy can be considered such—though a faint type of a priesthood may be found in the *Bollia* men, as those persons are called who pretend to know Jingy's manœuvres on given occasions, and are continually ready to steal a march upon him. Khourabene had been a *Bollia* man, and for that very reason appeared to believe as little as might be in the manifestations of Jingy as reported by the natives in general, such as frightening people in the bush as a bogy,—laying claim to the gum on certain trees which were pointed out to us, and knocking loudly in the night on the huts of natives who gathered it,—appearing in the likeness of a bird with long legs and a snout to a girl who went to drink at a pond after dark, whereby the said girl "berry near have a fit,"—and so on; but on one point, where Jingy throws off the mask, and shows himself in his true colours as the "murderer from the beginning," the faith of our poor savage friend was implicit.

A week after a native's death, his grave is visited by the *Bollia* men, to discern whether Jingy's track can be found anywhere near it or on it; and, in case it is pronounced visible, the nearest male relative of the dead must then wander away in search of a person of another tribe, whom he is necessitated to kill, that the departed soul may find rest. The chief mourner is restless and ill at ease till this supposedly pious duty has been fulfilled; after which, things drop into their ordinary course, and

the name of the dead is never more alluded to. It can therefore be easily conceived what distrust and suspicion is excited in the minds of the natives if a stranger is known to be hovering about their tribe. Khourabene described to me how, when his mother died, his father provided him and his little brothers with plenty of kangaroo meat, and then took his spears and "far away walk" to look for a woman to kill. To this cruel superstition we attributed the deaths of two native children within a short distance of our own house, who, on different occasions, were speared by strangers who instantly afterwards took flight. The possibility of a like fate being in store for a little native girl named Binnahan, whom we took under our care on her loss of her mother, made us at all times feel that her life was more precarious than that of a white child. The custom of thus pacifying one soul by sending another to keep it company is believed by most persons to have originated in a desire to preserve an even balance of population amongst the tribes; I have sometimes wondered whether it had a deeper root, and had sprung from the universal tradition of the necessity of sacrifices.

A friend once took me to see a native's grave; it was made in somewhat of a semicircular form, and on the day of the funeral had been covered, she said, with swansdown, of which when I visited the spot the wind had left no vestige. Green boughs are generally arched hutwise over the burial-place, which give it a pretty appearance whilst the leaves continue fresh; and even when the twigs and foliage are withered, the deserted mound impresses the mind of the beholder less painfully than does

the solitary grave of a Christian in unconsecrated ground. More melancholy objects of the kind can scarcely be imagined than two such graves which I have seen in different parts of the colony, each standing alone in a field, protected, it is true, with a railing, from being trodden on by cattle, or disturbed by the plough, but without any sacred emblem that should relieve the secular character of the desolation.

Though the natives often plagued us, lying about in the verandahs and asking us for all sorts of things which we did not choose to give them, yet, when we had seen none of them for any length of time, we missed their fun and frolic, and felt somewhat as people do whose children are gone to school. Especially we regretted the loss of their willing feet, since they were always ready to act as messengers, and carriers of letters or "paper talk," as such missives are styled by the natives, in the safe conveyance of which they show great fidelity. I never heard of letters being lost by any native to whom they had been entrusted, and if it should occur that a native with letters in his charge is prevented from continuing his journey, he invariably passes them on to another of his tribe, who transmits them safely to the hands of the persons for whom they were intended. The value of such trustworthiness can be easily understood in a country thinly peopled, where the nearest post-office is often very far away.

One morning of excessive heat it so happened that I commissioned a nephew of Khourabene's, named Ned, to carry a letter to the house of a colonist who lived eleven miles from Barladong. My courier was accompanied

by his wife, and I was much struck, when they set out, with the different styles of costume which the two had adopted for the journey. Ned was dressed very jauntily in nothing but a shirt drawn tightly to the waist with a belt, whereas the wife's attire might rather have befitted an expedition towards the South pole. She was quite weighed down with a garment of new opossum fur, reaching from her shoulders to her feet, and her spirits seemed as heavy as her clothing. The next day we had a thunderstorm, with pouring rain that lasted till the evening, when just after dark there came a tap at the window, accompanied by a very lamentable voice, which I recognized as belonging to Ned. He and his wife had brought me back an answer to my letter in spite of the bad weather, though she alone had any particular reason to complain of it, and of her, poor thing, one could hardly say that she was wet to the skin, as she had so very little on her excepting her skin to be wetted. Ned had changed clothes with her when the weather changed, by which I do not mean that he had given her his shirt, but rather that he had taken her fur; and I could not help suspecting that his original motive in making her his travelling companion had been that she might act as a clothes-horse. Being invited into the kitchen, they forthwith sat down upon the hearth in front of the fire, and some pepper having accidentally been mixed with the tea which our servant made for them, Ned seized the occasion to raise his wife's spirits by feigning death in consequence. That such an event should be regarded by her with complacency, after his recent behaviour about the fur, was possibly a suggestion of his own con-

science, and accordingly he fell back in a good stage attitude, crying out, "Pepper tea! I die! I poison!" On this the poor half-drowned wife burst into a laugh, which was echoed by the defunct, and the two immediately became as merry as a couple of children.

I took some pains to learn the native vocabulary, and was much interested at finding that the word "me-ul," signifying "an eye," which figures in the little list of words written down by Captain Cook from the lips of the savages that he met in New South Wales, was used in the same sense by our friends of Western Australia. I did not, however, attain to much proficiency in the study, and beyond an ostentatious display to Khourabene of any new word or phrase which I had picked up, was obliged to content myself with the conventional jargon which is universally adopted in speaking to the natives by all who are not really conversant with their language. This sort of hotch-potch is composed of native words largely mingled with English, and is better understood by the natives than plain English; it consists also in getting rid of all prepositions, driving the verbs to the end of the sentence, and tacking on to them the syllable "um" as an ornamental finish wherever it sounds euphonious. Thus I heard Khourabene calling out one day, "Dog hollarum, water wantum"; implying that he thought our house-dog was whining with thirst. A large quantity of anything is expressed by the words "big-fellow," as "big-fellow-rain," "big-fellow fond of," but in showing pity or condolence "poor old fellow" is the received form, and is of such universal application that it is quite as suitable to a baby cutting its teeth,

as to the moon suffering from eclipse, a misfortune which is laid at Jingy's door, who is supposed to have put out the light maliciously by carrying off the moon's fat. "Quiet fellow" and "sulky fellow" have an almost equally wide range, the first signifying any conceivable degree of amiability, either in man or beast, and the latter ferocity to a like extent. The words "get down," have been chosen as a synonym of the verb "to be," and the first question of a friendly native would be "Mamman all right get down?" meaning "is father quite well?" for strange to say *Mamman* is the native word for "father," whilst *N-angan* or *Oongan* stands for "mother." The cry which is used by the natives to attract the attention of persons at a distance is expressed by the two syllables *coo-ee*, the sound of which, when long drawn out at a high pitch, is carried so far, that the early Dutch navigator who asserted that Tasman's Land was solely inhabited by "howling evil spirits," probably formed his opinion from hearing one native *coo-ee* to another on beholding the unusual apparition of a ship. However, if on this fact alone was based the old sailor's conclusion, a return in the flesh to take another coasting survey might result in his pronouncing the same opinion of the whole Australian continent, for the colonists have universally adopted the natives' *coo-ee* whenever they desire to communicate with anyone at a distance, and have no means of doing so but by the voice. People who are lost in the bush, *coo-ee* for help, and their friends who are looking for them *coo-ee* for the chance of a reply. I have been even told of a man having brought home to London a colonial wife who, alarmed at being separated from her

husband by a crowd in Fleet Street, successfully hazarded a *coo-ee* to let him know in what part of that thoroughfare she was bewildered.

The natives sing continually, but the use of musical instruments seemed unknown amongst them, and I observed that their songs were always in the minor key. Khourabene's songs were of a surprising length, considering that he drew a deep breath at starting, and neither replenished his lungs nor brought his ditty to a conclusion until the original stock of wind was thoroughly exhausted. There was one especial song which he crooned so often that at last I asked him to translate it for me; but the words were not precisely of a sort to meet the approbation of the Society for the Preservation of Aboriginal Races, neither did they tally with the experience of the African traveller who wrote sentimental verses in praise of the kindness of women to the forlorn foreigner. Khourabene's song described the approach of a stranger, and the chorus was an urgent entreaty from the women that the men would lose no time in killing him.

It must not be supposed that the natives are without a belief in personal cleanliness, but their notions on such matters are rather different to white people's opinions on the same subject. We were now and then asked for a piece of soap to wash an old cotton shirt which a native might have received as a present from a colonist; but for the face and hands oil or grease is much preferred as a cleansing medium, and, on all occasions when full dress is indispensable, a native never thinks himself thoroughly *comme il faut* unless his whole body shines with oil from head to foot. A neighbour of ours told me of two natives

who presented themselves at her door to beg for grease, and who accounted for the dried-up condition of their legs, to which they ruefully pointed, by saying "in jail no grease get down"; the poor fellows having just been liberated from prison, where the authorities had failed to recognize unguents as a substitute for soap. I once found Khourabene sitting on the kitchen floor with his legs as far apart as those of the Colossus of Rhodes, while between them stood our black three-legged iron pot full of the cooling liquor from which a boiled ham had been lately lifted, the surface of which, with an indescribable twinkle of satisfaction, he was employed in skimming for the purposes of pomatum. It was a less objectionable application for the hair than that which was selected by a little native girl, who, having been neatly dressed on her installation as baby-carrier to a colonist's wife, emptied the contents of the lamp over her head immediately afterwards.

There was an old fellow named Isaac whom the other natives treated with a good deal of deference as chief of the tribe, and whom I amused myself with fancying that Friday's father had perhaps resembled, whose legs, when he had bestowed a little polishing on them, looked like dark old Spanish mahogany. My first acquaintance with Isaac was at a neighbouring farm-house, where he had been busy all day in carrying water to the washing copper. I was amused to see how much he enjoyed the mug of tea which he was drinking beside the kitchen hearth, and I noticed also the splendour with which his legs had been polished up, as the plentiful supply of grease to be met with at such an abode had induced him to make his toilet

directly his work was over. But the laugh was not all on my side. At sight of me he burst into a loud guffaw, the cause of which was explained by his mistress, who said that I was the only woman whom Isaac had ever seen in a black beaver riding-hat, of the shape commonly called in the colony a "bell topper." Isaac was evidently an old beau, for his hair was freshly curled, and every ringlet shone with oil. Wrapped up to the chin in a very handsome new fur mantle, he continued to stare at me and my hat over the top of his saucer, and to chuckle merrily to himself while his mistress expatiated to us on his many merits, but especially on the fact of his being wifeless, emphatically impressing upon us the great superiority of unmarried natives as servants over those who had wives. The reason of this preference for celibate savages is that the native women are less patient of remaining long in any one spot than their lords, and, considering the circumstances of their lives, I confess that I do not wonder that they crave for frequent change of place. With no settled habitations to develop a love of home, and with no idea of laying up money for their children or for old age, it seems to me that only idiots or philosophers could long endure the sight of the same scenery, and not confess to a feeling of being "bored."

One of the chief purposes for which the natives covet oil is that they may mix it with a red earth called *wilghee*, which they use in painting themselves. The effect of this *wilghee*, when applied to the cheeks alone, is far from unbecoming; but *wilghee*, which enjoys the same favour as the blue woad once so fashionable in Britain, is not confined to the face, but is frequently worn as a com-

plete costume, and even the old shirts which are begged from the colonists are often smeared with it.

Not long after I had afforded Isaac so much amusement I found a young dandy seated on the dry sand of the river bed, holding a little gilt-framed looking-glass the size of a crown-piece in one hand, whilst with the other he was putting the finishing touches to a general *wilghee* toilet, being then employed upon his face. A flask of salad oil stood beside him in the sand, and also a small box, like a pretence for a dressing-case, containing the red earth, with which he had so bedaubed himself from head to foot that his eyes alone retained their natural hue. To the extent permitted by his tiny mirror he appeared to be surveying himself as a work of art, which in a certain sense he was, for his hair was so thickly plastered with the red pigment, that every lock stood distinct and separate like the curls of a clay model.

When a native family is "placed in mourning," as newspapers would say, *wilghee* is inadmissible, and the face must be either chalked or blackened. Khourabene being invited to attend the funeral of a cousin, came into our kitchen to dress for the occasion, and first oiling his hands well, proceeded to rub them on the back of the chimney, and then to rub his face with his hands. By this means he paid the deceased a kinsman's tribute of respect, and at the same time produced in his own appearance a change so startling and complete that it might have misled the keenest observer. In which sooty mask we will leave Khourabene for the present, and pass on to the consideration of other subjects.

CHAPTER V.

A new servant — Make-shifts in cooking — Kaolin — Camp-ovens — A native "batch" — Variety of out-door premises — Nature of the Australian hard woods as fuel — Alarm of fire — Sandalwood and "stink-wood" as fuel — Trade in sandalwood — Licence for cutting wood in bush — Bush-fires — Sudden deafness caused by fright — Infant burnt — Beauty of bush-flowers, and want of any useful food — Great scarcity of edible roots in bush — Promise of dried fruits from vine, apricot, and other introduced trees — Oranges and lemons — Potatoes — Curious objection of settlers to eat spinach — Name of spinach growing wild — Dubbeltje — Origin of name — Pig-melons for apple-pies — Sugar-beer — Native brewing — Ned's fear of bad Spirit soothed by sugar-beer.

THE domestic who had accompanied us from England having left us a few months after our arrival, we thought ourselves fortunate in obtaining the services of a rosy smiling girl, the daughter of a free settler in our own district, whose sweetness of temper and quickness of wit soon disposed us to believe either that colonial servants were much better than they had been represented, or else that we had happened to alight upon the exception that proved the rule as to their inefficiency.

Together with some amusing seafaring expressions which she had picked up from her father, who had been in the marines, Rosa had inherited a sailor's aptness at contrivances and a happy dexterity, which would have gained her much applause even within easy reach of all the conveniences of life, but which were qualities of priceless value in a country where to contrive and to "make shift" seemed the order of the day. The prospects, for

instance, of being able to cook a dinner for "all hands," as Rosa styled the family, had appeared to me, I must own, exceedingly dismal on the day that I first surveyed our colonial kitchen range. But Rosa made light of all difficulties, and under her tuition I soon acquired the habit of making our meagre stock of kitchen utensils supply all our wants. The range consisted simply of three long iron bars set in two short ones, the whole supported upon four legs, which were no higher than just to leave room for logs of wood underneath. There was neither oven nor boiler, and the being compelled to trust to kettles and pans alone for all one's hot water, after having been accustomed to a good Leamington range at home, seemed like a coming down in life. Rosa, however, soon proved to me that where there was a will there was always a way, and that by "capsizing" kettle after kettle into a large wooden tub even a warm bath might soon be obtained. Of fire-irons a little shovel was the only representative, tongs being of no use in lifting logs cut in four-foot lengths; whilst the handle of a worn-out besom proved an efficient substitute for the time-honoured kitchen poker where there was nothing but wood embers to stir. The hearth and the sides of the wide open fireplace were composed of bricks, very roughly set, which Rosa kept scrupulously white with what she was pleased to call pipeclay, sometimes indulging her pictorial tastes by an after-embellishment of the snowy surface with a trellis-pattern traced in blue. Rosa's white pigment, of which she used to persuade Khourabene to bring her large lumps from time to time from the bush, would have fetched a high price in England, being in fact the

finest kaolin that a manufacturer of porcelain could desire. The use of such a valuable article of commerce for a purpose for which lime would have answered equally well, seemed to us rather inconsistent with the meanness of our kitchen furniture; but a shilling bestowed upon a native would always ensure us a plentiful supply of kaolin, whilst lime was so utterly wanting in a circle of many miles around, that the Government had offered a reward of forty pounds for its discovery.

We used to roast our meat in a Dutch oven set upon the hearth, and our pies and bread were baked upon the bars of the grate in camp-ovens, which are round flat-bottomed pots standing on three short legs, and with lids so contrived as to retain the hot embers with which they are heaped. When the cookery within requires inspection the lid and the embers have to be lifted off simultaneously, which is done by pushing a stick through the handle at the top, for of course there is no possibility of touching the lid with one's fingers. These iron contrivances being heavy to lift up and down, and a woman's skirts being exposed to much danger from fire when moving them, are used only in default of brick or clay ovens, which most people possess, and which are generally placed outside the house at a little distance. In one of these large brick ovens, belonging to a neighbour of ours, a native woman was found one morning snugly coiled up and fast asleep, having evidently passed the night there. I need not say, that on the discovery of this unexpected "batch" the oven was very speedily "drawn," but as it was less easy to deprive the intruder of the good night's rest that

she had already enjoyed than it was to dislodge her, she walked off to a certain extent victorious. It was not only the ovens that were usually placed apart from the dwelling; more often than not the kitchen itself was an isolated building, called a cooking-house; and this had been, I fancy, in some cases the original tenement, retained for culinary purposes alone as the family increased and its circumstances improved. In such cases it was easier to build an entirely new house than to add on to the first structure, though the arrangement reminded one of the plan which was adopted by the travelling showman and his wife, who when their caravan, in the form of a teapot on wheels, became too small for their increasing family, but admitted of no enlargement, supplemented it by a second caravan shaped like a coffee-pot, and thus secured a fresh feature of attraction for their show, as well as sufficient accommodation.

The best instance of this adding of house to house that we ever saw was in the dwelling-place belonging to a friend of ours, whose home looked like the nucleus of a small town. His entrance-hall, parlour, and best bed-room were in one house, the family slept in another, and their meals were cooked in a third. In many households it is a common practice to keep a convict as cook, and for the ladies to do the housemaid's work, yet the evils of fatigue and heat appeared to me more endurable than the presence of a convict as an indoor servant in our small establishment; for however well such a man may cook, and however good his behaviour in general may be, he is certain to get drunk occasionally, and, if granted a holiday, is probably being led to the lock-up at the hour when he ought to

have been returning home again at night. There was one man whom we found so handy about a house that we had half a mind to make an exception in his favour, and, as a sort of preparatory trial, we employed him for a fortnight's digging in the garden, but in the middle of the work, and just as the ground was in good condition after the rains, he took himself off on a drinking bout for three days, during which the sun's heat greatly increased in strength and so dried up the soil that the proper time for gardening was in great part lost. I asked him, when he was sober, how he could behave so foolishly, upon which he first favoured me with a few moral reflections upon want of strength of mind, and concluded with telling me, almost in so many words, that if he did not get drunk sometimes he should lose his own identity.

Through my ignorance of the qualities of the hard woods of Australia, I had anticipated much trouble and annoyance from being obliged to cook without coal; but when I had once learned the right manner of using the great logs of close, hard-grained timber, I gave them the preference over all other sorts of fuel. The heat thrown out is tremendous, and the logs, especially those from the tree known as the York gum, will be found alight on the under side hours after the fire is supposed to have been extinguished. Long hollow pieces of wood are often brought in for the fire, and these it is as well to handle cautiously, as snakes are now and then discovered inside them. We, however, were never so unfortunate as thus to meet with a snake, though in stripping off rough bark from the logs I have brought to light very large centipedes. There is a good deal of danger in leaving

these hollow logs on the hearth after the household has gone to bed, for they burn pertinaciously in consequence of their chimney-like character, and my husband once found the kitchen quite lighted up in the middle of the night by the flames that were bursting from each end of one of them, on which, before retiring to rest, I had poured a quantity of water, and thus left it, as I supposed, in a state incapable of mischief.

Our house was thatched with the rushes of the Xanthorrhœa, or blackboy, which are so inflammable, owing to the resin which they contain, that the greatest precautions against any risk of fire must be taken in all cases where they are thus used, especially during the great heat of the summer. Roofs of this resinous description will burn with extreme rapidity, and in the event of a fire breaking out beneath them, it is useless to attempt to save anything but life. The frequent sweeping of all chimneys is therefore absolutely requisite, and in consequence of our having not only neglected this precaution, but also piled up an unusually large fire on one chilly evening, we were suddenly roused from our books by a loud roaring noise, of which it was impossible to mistake the meaning. My husband ran out of doors to ascertain the extent of the danger, and finding that the whole garden was visible by the light of the flames from the chimney-top, he at once concluded that our house was doomed. His alarm was but of a few seconds' duration—a column of steam, producing instantaneously a most consolatory darkness, rose upwards from the chimney, and, amazed no less than relieved, he re-entered the sitting-room to find the fire out, and the hearth flooded. The truth was that I, not

knowing exactly what to do, but with a general impression that water was good in all cases of fire, had flung the contents of a large pitcher over the burning logs, and had thus, by the sudden production of a cloud of steam, caused the happy and unlooked-for phenomenon. After this fright it is perhaps needless to add that thenceforth our chimneys were swept with the greatest regularity.

To continue my subject of fires and fuel: if a piece of sandalwood is thrown upon the hearth, the perfume is almost overpowering and apt to cause severe headache; and on the other hand, the burning of even a small bit of the tree commonly called "stink-wood" will make the inmates of a room fly out of it, to avoid the terrible odour.

Sandalwood is, as I have already said, one of the chief exports of the colony, and it is often the practice to store the logs in large heaps in the forest until a convenient opportunity for carting it to Perth or Guildford shall occur. An accumulation of this kind belonging to one of our friends, which had reached the value of a hundred pounds, was entirely consumed in a bush-fire shortly before we left Western Australia. Anyone is at liberty to carry away fuel from the bush, provided it be dead or fallen wood; but to cut growing timber requires a licence of ten shillings per month. The quantities of dead trees scattered all over the bush are enormous, and when allowed, as is sometimes the case, to lie on the ground near a habitation of the better class, they are very disfiguring to an English eye, though, generally speaking, the colonists leave no trees, living or dead, standing in immediate proximity to their houses. This custom, which at first I deplored as involving a wilful disregard of the

picturesque, I soon learned to be a sad necessity, on account of the prevalence of bush-fires. Through these many a man has been burned out of house and home, whilst the dwellings of other individuals have been only saved by a providential changing of the wind just as all hope had appeared lost.

An anecdote which was told me, in connection with a bush-fire, may be interesting to physiologists. A lady happening to be alone in the house with her young children, became alarmed at finding that a bush-fire was making rapid strides in the direction of her homestead. The plan which is ordinarily pursued on such occasions is to beat out the fire with branches of trees, as it advances along the low grass, and to continue doing so in spite of fatigue, as long as there is a chance of extinguishing the flames. To do this with any hope of success a large body of men is required, but a woman, single-handed, could effect nothing, and the danger appeared imminent, when two gentlemen, who had seen the approach of the fire and were aware of her lonely condition, rode up, and rescued her and her family. Being released from her anxiety, she found herself almost stone deaf, and has so continued ever since.

Bush-fires are variously accounted for by different people, some inclining to the idea that the sun, striking upon the thick glass at the bottom of some of the many broken bottles which lie about the bush, acts upon them as if they were burning-glasses and sets the grass alight; other persons, who probably do not smoke, assert that many fires are caused by those who do; and as a third theory, it has been suggested that the friction of two boughs,

chafing against each other in the wind during extremely hot weather, will evolve sufficient heat to produce flame. A fourth, and perhaps the most common cause of these conflagrations, may be found in those fires which every one, black or white, lights if he happens to rest for a few hours, or for the night, in the bush. It is, indeed, forbidden, under a penalty, to leave such fires burning when resuming the journey, but the law is very often disobeyed, and great mischief sometimes follows such neglect, especially in the summer. The sight of a traveller's fire, forsaken but still smouldering, would often set me thinking of the poor old people whom we had known in far-off English villages, shivering for want of fuel, whilst here lay such an abundance of it going to waste. As a set-off to my regrets on this account, there was nothing uncommon in our being asked to help poor families who had lost everything that they possessed through the destruction of their huts by bush-fires.

On one occasion, shortly before we came to the colony, a woman had gone to the well at a little distance from her hut to fetch water for ordinary household purposes; leaving her baby, which had been baptized that very morning, sleeping quietly in its cradle, whilst no one else was in the house. Having filled her pails she returned towards her home, and, on coming within sight of it, beheld the thatched roof in a blaze, and not a hope left of saving the poor little innocent, which was destroyed in a few moments.

A recent bush-fire imparts a peculiarly sombre look to the iron-rust colour of the red gum and mahogany trees, but, as time passes on, the gloomy appearance of their stems

disappears, and the scene becomes one of romantic wildness. The exterior of those hollow trees from which the bark has been burnt off for years looks almost white in contrast to their blackened interiors scooped out by the flames; and I have seen a tall, pale stem, denuded of branches and standing like a gigantic stake, to which the fire had given so fine a point as to suggest the notion that to drop upon it from a balloon would be anything but desirable.

But amidst scenery in which the eye finds so much of interest and attraction one looks in vain for any fruit-bearing trees, or indeed for *anything* that is eatable. The land is essentially a land of flowers, and myriads of lovely plants overrun the ground which are the ornaments of our conservatories at home. To mention two species familiar to all gardeners: we have gathered all kinds of blue lobelias, and also a plant closely resembling the scarlet variety as well, and we have seen the sloping sides of the water-courses thickly covered with the favourite *acacia armata* in full bloom; but such useless beauty mocks hungry people who have lost themselves in the bush, and I well remember the disgust with which a poor woman spoke of having seen "nothing but great yellow flowers" during several hours that she had spent in walking up and down trying to regain the beaten track from which she had wandered. The only wild fruit that I ever heard of was the native cherry; a fruit almost entirely composed of a hard kernel the size of a marble, with a thin outside rind that has an acid taste, and of which the colonists make a sweetmeat in default of anything better. The stone is buff-coloured, and much corrugated, and when a good many of them are strung

together, and alternated with the nuts of the sandalwood tree, they make a pretty row of beads, a purpose for which nature seems to have intended them.

The scarlet seed-pods of the Zamia plants are decidedly poisonous unless buried underground for a fortnight, by which means they become harmless eating, and, as such, are then consumed by the natives; but the process would little benefit a starving person to whom the necessity of burying his dinner for fourteen days before he could eat it might be only too suggestive of what he himself would be fit for by the time his meal was ready. Our little native girl Binnahan once dug up for me a root about two inches long which did not taste amiss, and at another time she brought me a stalk which she begged me to try, recommending it with the words "black fellow eatum—big-fellow glad findum," but she seemed rather injured at the faint praise that I bestowed on its insipid though not nauseous flavour. A colonial lady also showed me a plant with a glutinous leaf somewhat resembling the half-hardy annual called *mezembryanthemum*, of which she told me she had sometimes made puddings, but that they were not very tempting. With the exception of the acacia seeds, which the natives were in the habit of pounding into meal before they learned to prefer flour, I have now named every indigenous esculent brought to my notice, and I do not think that the table which the whole of them could "furnish forth" would be considered by a vegetarian as an inducement to emigrate.

If due attention, however, is paid to situation and to soil, imported fruits and vegetables appear to find Western Australia as congenial as the lands to which they severally

belong. Vines will grow well wherever they are planted, and the wine which they produce, though as yet neither cheap nor particularly good, is far more agreeable and wholesome than most of the liquid that is sold in the colony under the name of port or sherry. There is, therefore, no doubt that the quality of the colonial wines will improve at the same pace as the experience and education of the vine-growers.

It was usual to see raisins laid to dry upon the roofs of the houses, or upon tables set out of doors, for the multitude of birds prevented the adoption of the better plan of leaving the fruit to dry upon the trees, after first twisting the stalk of each bunch so as to hinder the passing of the sap. It seems reasonable to suppose that, at some future day, both currants and raisins will be exported from Western Australia, but before that comes to pass, their price in the colony must have diminished considerably. The price of raisins in the Barladong stores was a shilling the pound, and currants were only twopence cheaper. Oranges and lemons came to great perfection in the swampy and fine alluvial soils around Perth and Guildford, but no amount of cultivation could induce them to bear fruit on our side of the Darling Range, and at Barladong the price of oranges, when in season, was threepence each, a mortifying contrast, for the buyer, to their English value.

The same frosts which prevented the ripening of oranges with us, were destructive to any early crops of the potato. The early spring potatoes were always nipped, and the hot weather returned too soon to leave time for the growth of a second crop. Whilst our

neighbours on the sea-coast were rejoicing in vegetables of all kinds, we of the *ultramontane* districts sometimes paid sixteen shillings the bag for potatoes so diminutive that at home they would have been picked out to boil for pigs. In one of our rides we came across a poor man who had established a potato ground in a bit of swamp, and who succeeded in securing a good early crop for sale, by ingeniously lighting large fires at night on the windward side of his garden. The experiment was facilitated by the loneliness of the situation, which might have rejoiced the heart of a hermit, but a warming apparatus of this kind could not of course become one of universal application.

We were, however, much elated by discovering that the finest kind of prickly-seeded spinach grew spontaneously as a weed in our glebe, and in most of the fields around us, during a few weeks of the winter. Our pleasure at finding the spinach was equalled by the surprise which we felt at the ignorance that prevailed amongst our neighbours respecting its qualities as a vegetable, one only amongst them seeming to be aware of its excellence. Neither, with exception of this enlightened person, did anyone appear to know the name of spinach as an Australian product, and the plant was spoken of with opprobrium as "that horrid double gee." When we asked how it came into the colony we were told that it was a Cape plant, and the riddle of its seemingly unmeaning name was solved to our satisfaction by my husband accidentally reading of a Dutch coin called *Dubbeltje*,* having an edge so very sharply indented that

* On referring to a Dutch dictionary we found *Dubbeltje* given as an old word for a twopenny-piece, the modern name of which is *Du'belde stuyver*.

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quarrelsome Dutchmen sometimes gave one another very awkward wounds with it. Whether the plant had received its name at the Cape, or had carried it there from Holland, I know not, but it appeared to have been brought into Swan River with no other appellation; and the dislike with which the colonists regarded it was not quite without foundation, as the extreme sharpness of its seeds was troublesome in a country where to go barefoot is a common practice. I remember seeing a poor barefooted child, who had but lately come to Barladong, and who had been sent to our house on an errand, standing midway in our field, crying with all her might, and refusing to stir another step forwards "because of the double gees." The rapid and wide diffusion of the plant has been no doubt due to the manner in which the spines of the seeds stick to the fleeces of the sheep, like burrs which they much resemble. We did our best to persuade our neighbours to give the spinach a place on their tables, but, with the exception of a very few persons, the prejudice against it as a troublesome weed was too old and deep to be exploded by our example.

Though neither oranges nor potatoes took kindly to the climate of Barladong its apricots were unrivalled, and the fruit upon our standard trees was far finer than any that we had ever seen produced even by scientific care on garden walls in England. Apricots were less cultivated than they deserved, for the reason, perhaps, that few persons knew much more of the right method of pruning them than one of our friends did, who carefully cut out all the bearing wood, and then wondered that he had no fruit. Standard peach-trees were much in favour,

but as a rule their fruit was not so good as that which is produced from wall-trained peach-trees in England. In one colonial garden we found a fruit that was new to us, in which, though two kinds were united, yet each was in perfection—to wit, a completely-formed sweet almond, covered outwardly not with its own insipid green rind, but with the ripened pulp of a full-flavoured peach. The tree that bore this dual crop was a solitary specimen. As to the seasons when our different fruits came in,—the figs ripened in the end of November, apricots at Christmas, grapes in January, and peaches in February. The grapes lasted until the end of February, and as the peaches were then over also, there followed a fast from fruit through many months, during which the common English jams were much prized, and expensive in proportion. I soon ceased to feel surprised that the colonial ladies should expend time and sugar in producing such a poor preserve as that made from green grapes.

The composition of a pudding was so vexed a question in the dearth of materials, that a neighbour who deprecated my contempt for grape jam did "nothing exaggerate" in asserting as a good reason for making it, that "half the year round one scarcely knew what to set upon the dinner-table," that is, as second course. Under these circumstances we had recourse to a large field-melon, called the pig or cattle melon, which, in spite of its natural insipidity, produced, when largely helped out with vinegar and sugar and baked under a crust, an imitation by no means despicable of apple-pie.

An immigrant girl who had been telling me that her admirer was "crazed for her at first sight," adduced in

proof of his condition that her acquaintance with him had begun by his throwing a pig-melon at her, and that he continued to throw more melons whenever she entered the field where he was at work. As a missive expressive of affection I should have thought a cannon-ball had been quite as sentimental; but the girl's experiences of courtship showed me that the throwing of cucumbers and vegetable marrows over the garden wall by Mrs. Nickleby's insane lover was more true to nature than I had supposed.

I believe that when Englishmen are totally deprived of beer their friends will readily admit the case to be one that excuses grumbling and demands condolence; in order therefore to avoid both, we now set about brewing a supply of beer with coarse sugar. Not that we should not greatly have preferred malt, if we could have had it, but, with a view perhaps of keeping up the prices of bottled beer, which in the country stores is commonly sold at twenty-four shillings the dozen, malt is not generally made in the colony, and if beer is brewed in private houses at all, it is of sugar, mostly of the very cheap sort procured from India. I did indeed hear of one colonist who had, in very early days, manufactured malt for his own use, but as he had also gone the lengths of making a tank to collect the rain-water, and, further, of drawing it up by means of an iron pump, he was then too much in advance of his age to find imitators.

As a substitute for malt we found that good Lisbon sugar answered better than the coarser kinds, which not only spoil the flavour of the beer, but throw up such a quantity of scum as to make the use of them no economy.

The method of brewing is to put the sugar into boiling water in the proportion of a pound to a gallon, and when the scum has well risen and has been thoroughly cleared off, to throw in as many ounces of hops as there are pounds of sugar, and then to boil the whole for a full hour longer. The liquor is afterwards poured into coolers, and should be worked with yeast according to the good old rule "when the brewer can see distinctly the reflection of his own face in the wort." Like its prototype small beer, sugar-beer ought to "see a Sunday," but in hot weather it is often drunk at the end of four days, whether Sunday has intervened or not. The natives are so fond of anything sweet, that they consider an empty sugar bag a valuable prize, and, when fortunate enough to obtain one, they soak it in a tub of water, and all sit round the tub drinking the mixture in great sociability: they are not, however, lucky enough to get such a prize often, for so much sugar adheres to the matting of which the bags are made that some saving people always boil the bag up with the mash when they brew, by which process I can hardly imagine that they improve the taste of their beer.

Rosa used often to enlist Khourabene's services in brewing, on which occasions he always lighted a fire out of doors, and, making an extempore little grate of bricks, with two pieces of iron hooping laid across them as bars for the copper to rest upon, he would diligently skim the sugar, and constantly stir the hops that they should not boil over. The fact of thus helping to brew seemed, as he thought, to give him a vested interest in afterwards drinking the beer, and he seldom appeared in the kitchen without reminding us of his assistance. I was lying down

one day, bathing my head which was aching, when Khourabene, whose bare feet never at any time gave notice of his approach, put his head in at my window, and resting his arms on the sill, said in a voice of great condolence, "Poor old mother—poor old mother"; then with a slight change of tone added, "I cleanum fowl-house—I wheelum barrow—I givum horses hay—little bit of beer, if you please." On another occasion Ned, who was leaving our house in the dusk of the evening, expressed himself as troubled with apprehensions of "Jingy." I could not at first make out what it was that he professed to dread, and, not altogether understanding what he was talking about, I told him to go. Upon this he explained; "Devil frighten, missis—give me beer, and then I anywhere walk!" I laughed at his fears and told him that I had no dread of Jingy or of any other walker of the night, but he treated my assumption of courage with great contempt, reminding me that I was safe at home, whereas he was obliged to go out into the darkness.

There is no doubt that in this case Ned exaggerated his fears in the hope that he might be allowed to drown them in beer, but for all that, it is a real and fixed article of belief in the native mind that Jingy walks the bush at night. Even the most intelligent of the aborigines will assert that at some time or other of their lives they have seen him, but as each apparition of Jingy of which we heard wore a different form, he either was the Australian Proteus, or depended solely on the imagination of his beholders for his bodily shape.

CHAPTER VI.

Drawbacks to progress of West Australia.—"Dangerous" country—Mr. Drummond identifies poisonous plants—Land when infested by them useless for pastoral purposes—Evil partly remediable—Intelligence required in shepherds—Impossibility on many roads of employing bullock-wagons—Scattered nature of cultivated districts—Narrow views of things in general—Difficulty of introducing tramways or railroads—Grain-bearing eastern districts—Railroad anxiously demanded—Can be formed only by Government funds—Different interests amongst the colonists—Want of means of locomotion—Monotony of colonial life—Seasons in Southern hemisphere—Sunday Lessons seem inappropriate—Hot weather at Christmas—Trouble of cooking—St. Thomas seems out of place at Midsummer—An old-fashioned Christmas—Excitement caused by cow—Khourabene makes a well-timed visit—Boils plum-pudding—Khourabene's old master—Servants' wages paid in live-stock—Temporary prosperity of colony—Reminiscences of hard-work and poverty—Listening for coach-wheels—Grinding flour by hand—Colonial-made steam-engine—Weddings and "traps"—More luxuries and less comfort—Shepherds and March-winds—Gin in the sheepfold—Shepherdesses—Spears in thatch—Poisoned sheep—Bringing home pigs—Gentleness necessary in tending sheep—Anecdote of little swineherd.

ONE of the peculiarities which has militated against the onward progress of Western Australia is the scattered character of its various settled districts, caused by the large intervals of sterile or dangerous country by which the tracts of good land are frequently separated from one another. By the word "dangerous," I mean those parts of the country on which the poisonous plants, which have proved so severe a drawback to the prosperity of the colony, exist in such profusion as to render the land unsafe to sheep or cattle.

When the country was first settled the colonists were

unable to distinguish the poisonous plants from the harmless ones; their sheep and cattle died, and it was evident that the losses were caused by injurious food of some description; but several years elapsed, and much careful inquiry was needed, before the true authors of the mischief could be identified. The settlers owe a debt of gratitude to the late Mr. Drummond, the well-known colonial botanist, for his careful researches and accurate experiments by which the injurious plants were at length discovered, and the best means of destroying them were pointed out.

The most deadly of these plants are of the *gastralobrum* tribe, and in cases where a large extent of country is infested by them the land is useless for all pastoral purposes. Horses do not seem to suffer, though, as I have already said, a few cases are on record in which they too have perished from feeding upon the "poison," the term always used in the colony to express the existence of any or all of these deleterious plants. "There is poison upon that run"—"the sheep have been among the poison"—and similar expressions are constantly in use. If, however, the "poison" is not prevalent over the whole extent of the country, but only scattered thinly over certain parts of it, it is possible to extirpate it in the course of two or three years by care and watchfulness, while, in the meantime, an intelligent shepherd may succeed in preventing his flock from frequenting the dangerous parts of the run.

In other cases, where the plants are confined to a few localities only, but too plentiful on those spots to allow of total eradication, the evil may be partly combated by

fencing out the sheep and cattle from such places, usually small hills, and thus rendering the rest of the land safe and profitable. But it is useless to attempt tasks of this nature, which require not only an energetic employer but also intelligent and careful servants, until a far larger supply of respectable free labour than has yet found its way to Swan River can be introduced. The lazy London pickpocket or housebreaker may do well enough for a shepherd or hut-keeper upon the plains of Victoria or New South Wales, but amongst the forests of West Australia he is worse than useless. Hence the constant cry from the settlers to their friends in England, "above all things send us out respectable intelligent shepherds."

Another evil has arisen from the existence of these poisonous plants; namely, that the internal circulation of the colony has been impeded by the risk involved in driving herds of cattle or flocks of sheep from one district to another. So great is this danger, in some parts of the country, that the Government has been obliged to employ a large force of convicts to grub up the poisonous plants for a distance of a hundred yards on each side of some of the main roads, in order to provide a strip of land over which the animals may be driven with some approach to security, though even with this precaution it is necessary to hurry them over the journey at a quicker rate than is good for them in order to prevent them from straying out of the prepared belt of land.

It is well known that in many parts of Australia bullocks are preferred to horses for dragging the heavy drays loaded with wool from the country stations to the capital. This method of conveying heavy goods is forbidden to

many districts of West Australia, owing to the prevalence of "poison" upon most of the roads—another proof, were more proof wanting, of the serious injury which these plants have done to the colony. But besides these obstacles to the internal communication between the different districts, there are also others arising from the existence of large tracts which are too sterile to repay cultivation, or too deficient in water to be of any use as sheep or cattle runs.

I have already mentioned the large extent of forest through which we passed on our journey from Perth to the eastern districts, and the completely wild character of the whole of the road, with the exception of the country immediately around Guildford. This is but a type of the general character of the whole colony, and of the distances by which the settled portions of its territory are divided from one another. The consequence is that each cleared and cultivated district becomes, as it were, an oasis in the midst of the general desert, only that the desert is not always a stony arid waste, but is often covered with magnificent forests of timber, whilst even its sand plains are for three months in the year brilliant with the most beautiful flowers.

This wide separation of most of the settled districts from one another has been the source of many disadvantages. It has led to a cramped and narrow manner of regarding the general interests of the whole colony, since each settlement has naturally fallen into the habit of looking at its own interests and its own wishes in the first place, without much reflection as to the general welfare of the whole country.

But perhaps the greatest evil of all has been the manner in which the introduction of railways or even tramways into the colony has been affected. To take our own district as an example: the country to the eastward of the Darling Range is the first agricultural district, of any considerable extent, which is met with when travelling from the sea-coast at Fremantle directly into the interior. It ought, therefore, to become the chief granary of the capital. The whole district is a wide one, and might, if fully cultivated, furnish sufficient corn to supply not only all colonial wants, but a large export demand also.

These eastern districts are usually spoken of by the collective title of "over the hills," and contain the little towns of York, Northam, Newcastle, and Beverley—Barladong being one of these, though for reasons which have been already stated, I have given it its native name in these pages. These places lie at distances varying from ten or fifteen to twenty or thirty miles from one another; but the country which intervenes is most of it occupied, and settlers' houses occur pretty thickly, that is, about every three or four miles.

The inhabitants are all employed in the same pursuits, chiefly agricultural farming combined with sheep and cattle breeding, and have therefore similar interests and similar desires. A railroad from some part of the district to Perth is that public work which they wish for most earnestly, and in comparison with which every other work appears to them to be almost useless. Now were there a fair amount of population upon the line of country between Perth and the eastern settlements, there would

be a good prospect of such an amount of roadside traffic as to render a railway a paying concern at once; but as there is none, it can only be formed by Government funds, and must depend for success upon a *future* traffic, to be developed by the increased activity which it would call forth. The same argument applies to almost every public work which can be named—the various districts are so far from one another that each place stands alone; its interests are not the same as even those, perhaps, of its nearest neighbour. The settler at Albany has nothing in common with him at Bunbury; the agriculturist at York knows nothing of the wants of the pearl-fishers at Roebourne; each district has its own needs and its own habits of thinking, and does not trouble itself about what the other parts of the colony may be doing. The expense and the difficulty of travelling are both so great, that the inhabitants of one part of the colony very seldom seem to visit the other districts, and I even knew a lady at Barladong who had not visited Perth, or indeed left her own home, for more than twenty years.

The stationary habits involved in these obstacles to locomotion naturally impart a great sameness to life in West Australia, and furnish little to relate concerning it that is either of exciting interest, or that partakes of the character of adventure. One day is an exact counterpart of the other, with no variety but a change of occupations in accordance with the different seasons of the year. A relation of events therefore, in regular sequence, during the five years that we spent in the colony, could only weary by its monotony; nor have I a hope of interesting my readers, excepting by the selection of such incidents

and peculiarities as offer a strong contrast to modes of life in England.

It was a long while before I became accustomed to the change of seasons, and I seemed to lose my count of time with the absence of the landmarks (if such an expression may be permitted) that record its flight in the other hemisphere. There was even a feeling of inappropriateness about the Sunday lessons, which in the old country, long habit makes to harmonize with certain states of weather. For instance, the first morning lesson on the Ninth Sunday after Trinity seems well-timed at home, occurring as it does in the middle of summer, and increasing, by its apparent fitness to the season, our interest in the description of Ahab and Obadiah going different ways in their search for water; whereas on the southern side of the world the chapter falls due in the rainy season, and perhaps on that particular Sunday the children would bring me word that, as they came over the bridge to school, they had seen that "the river was beginning to run," an event which was brought about only by many successive days of rain.

But never did the weather seem so little in accordance with our feelings as at Christmas, when the heat was so great as to make all exertion a burden, excepting in the early hours of the morning. To this circumstance I attribute the little notice which that season of joy receives in Western Australia as compared with the acclamations that welcome it in northern countries; and though the traditional bill of fare is strictly adhered to, and the neglect of it would be esteemed an affront to

one's mother-country, yet the necessity for much cookery at that time involves such severe conflict with the weather that no one thinks of prolonging the festivity; indeed I should much doubt whether there are many persons, born and reared in the colony, who have ever heard of Twelfth Day. Christmas Day itself was celebrated with all due religious observance and with the meeting together of friends, and though the dressing of the church beforehand was a real labour in such a temperature, volunteers for the work were never lacking. But the one great day seemed to constitute the whole of Christmastide.

On the occurrence of the first Christmas that we spent "over the hills," I felt as if brought to a dead halt in all my previous notions of promoting the happiness and comfort of the poor. My thoughts had been running upon the last time that we had witnessed that festival in our old home parish—the dole of beef distributed to every family—the old women coming to the house through the sleet on St. Thomas's Day to beg for their accustomed shillings—"going Thomasing," as they called it—the waits coming outside our windows at twelve o'clock on Christmas Eve, a chair being especially carried for the accommodation of the double-bass—my mind had been fixed on such recollections as these, and there seemed to be something unnatural in being in a country where neither blankets nor flannel would be seasonable gifts, and where "Thomas" was the tutelary saint not of the shortest day but of Midsummer. By the time, however, that we had lived five years in the colony we had learned to think an excessive degree of heat at Christ-

mas quite as correct as an equal amount of cold would have been at home, and, on the principle of extremes meeting, I daresay that if we had stayed longer the hotter the Christmas the more "old-fashioned" we should have begun to call it. One's ideas, however, of a *merry* Christmas are not so easily shifted; these require the contrast of sharp weather out of doors with light and warmth within, besides which mirth is so inseparable from activity that the sun-heat in repressing the last goes far to extinguish the first.

Considerable excitement was caused us upon a more than ordinarily hot Christmas Eve, by our cow managing to tumble down the side of a steep bank into the river, where, in about 30 feet of water and only her head above the surface, she was surveyed with perplexity by our own household, and by some sympathizing neighbours. The depth of water into which she had fallen no doubt saved her from breaking her legs, but as it was impossible for her to be got up again into the field by the same road by which she had descended, owing to the perpendicular nature of the bank, we were at a loss what to do. The height from the water was more than twenty feet, and though one of our kind friends tried to cut a sort of staircase for her, up which he thought she might manage to climb, she attempted the ascent in vain; she could neither clamber up herself nor could we drag her up by ropes, so she remained swimming about in the pool, which was nearly half a mile in length. At last a native made a ball of his few clothes, tied them on his head, and with a rope in his hand, swam out after poor "Mooley," who seemed rather to enjoy her bath. When once the rope

was round her horns she was soon towed to a landing-place on the opposite side, where she was met by a woman sent a mile round for that purpose, and driven home.

That night, when every door was standing open, we heard a cheerful voice shouting the name of "Master," and in walked Khourabene, whom we had not lately seen, desirous of being informed whether what he had heard in the town was true, that to-morrow was "Kismas." Khourabene knew very well the kind of dinner to expect if this report should prove correct, and had had his own reasons for timing his visit so neatly, for if there is one thing in the world in which natives show a similarity of taste to white people, it is in fondness for a Christmas pudding. He did not mistrust our willingness to give him a share of our plum-pudding, but he had a great desire to make one for himself, in fact, had brought with him flour for the purpose, and, being humoured with the other ingredients, he tied them up all in a cloth, and dropped his bundle very knowingly into the pot where the parson's pudding was already boiling.

Khourabene had gained this expertness in cookery by frequenting the house of a very kind-hearted settler, whose own and wife's great pleasure at Christmas was to make an enormous plum-pudding expressly for the natives, and to see their enjoyment of it. Khourabene's recollections of this good couple were sometimes of the suggestive sort, as for instance, it so happened that my husband being seriously indisposed on one occasion when he paid us a visit, after eying the invalid with tears for a few moments, he informed me that he had cried so much when his "old master" was ill that "missis say,

'Good boy Khourabene,' and give me three sticks of tobacco."

The history of this "old master," as Khourabene called him, who made the natives so merry at Christmas, was an example of the success which seldom fails in a new country to await on the industry of those to whom agricultural labour has been familiar from their childhood. He had left England as a lad, and had come out to Western Australia in a humble capacity a few years after the first foundation of the Swan River Settlement. By degrees his honesty of purpose and steady industry had enabled him to work his way upwards until he became the upper servant or bailiff to one of the more wealthy of the settlers. Now at that period money, which had been plentiful enough quite at the commencement, had become so scarce, owing to the complete failure of the plans upon which the colony had depended for success, that it was out of the power of even the larger landowners to liquidate their servants' wages in cash, and the payments were of necessity postponed.

The consequence of this state of things (some twenty years ago) was as follows:—The wages accumulated, as a debt due from the master, until they amounted to a considerable sum, and when payment was made it was almost invariably in kind. Perhaps ten or twenty head of cattle would be paid as wages to a shepherd or a stockman for two or three years' service, the bargain including the right to run the cattle with the master's herd. Moreover, as all stock had diminished in value, owing to the great depression in which everything was involved, and as the sheep and cattle were taken by the servants at

this diminished valuation in payment of their wages, it will easily be seen that the man who landed with nothing but his own hands and head to trust to had, if he was honest and sober, a better chance of getting on, during that period of utter depression, than the originally wealthy settler, whose capital had been sunk in flocks and herds for which he could find no sale, and which he was obliged to part with by degrees to those who watched and tended them, since he had no money with which to pay their wages.

Thus, during the long period of utter stagnation which fell upon this unfortunate colony after its ill-managed foundation, many of the servants had become flock-owners and cattle-breeders, while most of their former masters had been ruined. The servants were therefore in a position to share in the advantages of the artificial life which was breathed into Swan River by the introduction of convicts in 1850, when a sheep, which but a short time before had been worth only eighteenpence, rose suddenly in price to a guinea, and every other description of farm produce acquired a fictitious value. There were then but a few of the original settlers left to share this harvest; many of them had quitted Western Australia disappointed and half-ruined men, others had died of broken hearts, and some few, yet more unfortunate, had become useless drunkards through sorrow and despair.

Of the sad history of these early years an account will be found towards the end of these pages, but it was necessary to refer to them here in order that the reader might be able to understand the history of Khourabene's old master. He was amongst the individuals who profited

most by the colony becoming a penal settlement, and, on finding himself a rich man, he visited England for the purpose of assisting his relations at home, and brought back with him to Western Australia fourteen of them in the same ship in which he was a cabin passenger.

As we sat upon the steps of his verandah one hot night, talking of farm labour and of farming lads in England, he gave us a sketch of his own early history, commencing with the assertion that the colonial boys knew nothing of real hardship. Then he told us how he had begun life as a poor child, earning half-a-crown a week by cutting turnips for sheep, and how, in the winter, his feet were so covered with chilblains that he could scarcely pull on his boots in the morning, or do anything but "hobble and cry" for the first quarter of a mile after starting to go to his work—and how eagerly he listened towards evening for the sound of the wheels of the once famous coach 'Defiance,' the punctual passing of which was as good as a clock to the labourers in the turnip field, in announcing the hour, as it rolled by, which brought the day's toil to an end. How, when he was seventeen he took it into his head that he would go to Australia, and how he paid a farewell visit to his old master, who gave him sixpence as a parting present, accompanied with the time-honoured advice "to keep it always in his pocket, so that he might never want money"; and how when he sowed his first bit of land his wife did the bird-scaring with a decrepit gun, of which the cock was missing, so that she had to hit the cap with a hammer each time she fired.

From the windows of his house we now looked over a tract of more than five hundred acres of cleared land, all

his own, and covered with waving corn; this open space seeming to hold at bay the primeval forest that bordered it, and in the hollow where a large pool separated the cornfields from the farm-yard, there rose a steam flour-mill, a late addition to the homestead of which the full value can be appreciated only by those who have known what it is to have to grind the supply of flour for the family day after day in a hand-mill. I have heard early colonists allude to this as being the most irksome of their daily occupations, especially on Saturdays, when a double portion had to be ground to last over the Sunday.

In the days when Barladong was first springing up into a town all the wheat was ground in these hand-mills, and great were the complaints of the labour falling upon settlers' wives in consequence. Two ingenious men, one of whom was a blacksmith, chivalrously endeavoured to remedy this hardship by constructing a steam-engine from such odds and ends as could be picked up in the colony, which probably then afforded a narrower choice of materials than the contents of an ordinary marine-store at home. They manfully hammered a lot of old tire-iron into the form of a boiler, and actually succeeded in making their engine grind corn, but it was so noisy over its work, and devoured such a quantity of fuel, that it soon wore out its own constitution, and became useless. It remained, however, even in our day, standing in the old mill in its cashiered condition; an interesting monument of colonial perseverance and courageous struggle with difficulties.

In spite of all the toil and inconvenience that beset those early days, they were fondly looked back to by

many of the colonists, and the comparisons which I often heard them draw between times past and times present were not always to the advantage of the latter. It is true that the ladies had left off plaiting their husbands' hats from the straw of their own fields; neither was it any longer necessary for them, as in old times, to patch and mend worn-out boots, in order that one neat pair might be kept for Sundays until the arrival of some long-expected ship. Hats could now be purchased at the stores, and, if boots were wanted, both bootmaker and leather were at hand without any need for waiting for ready-made boots from England.

Neither were there any longer such primitive ways of conducting weddings as were related to me by an early colonist of a marriage at which she had assisted, when the bride and bridegroom were escorted by their friends, all on foot, through the bush to church, and afterwards accompanied to the banks of the Swan, where the pair embarked for their home in a little boat, with an old man in the bows playing on a fiddle, and with a goat and her kid, the property of the amiable bride, bleating discordantly somewhere amidships. Nowadays wedding parties drove very splendidly to church in "traps," as the vehicles resembling dog-carts are colonially called, and the number of these was quoted in deciding upon the merits of the affair, just as carriages are reckoned up on similar occasions in England. "A wedding of eleven traps" was something startling in its magnificence. But I used often to hear people express the opinion that what they had of late years gained in material comfort they had lost in sociability. One fact was especially dwelt

upon as being a great change for the worse, namely, that the loaded teams of wool and sandalwood were now usually put under the charge of ticket-of-leave men or expirees as drivers, whereas in former times each gentleman had been his own wagoner, and had, at the evening halt, joined with his fellow-colonists in the merriment around the one huge camp fire, good feeling being thus promoted between persons whose birth was not always equal, although their occupations were similar. The influx of Government money has produced a rapid increase of wealth in many cases, and those who have been lucky in the general scramble too often look down upon those who have remained poor, thus reducing into narrower compass the already small society.

Hitherto my only ideas of a shepherd's life had been formed on the examples which I had seen at home, where, in our own village, the three that I knew best were men prematurely bent with rheumatism, and frequently compelled, nevertheless, to brave the biting east winds at two o'clock in the March mornings, when the very lambs themselves, born at such early hours, and with the weathercock in that direction, often required to be "brought round" by the judicious administration of small doses of gin. Whether no other species of nursing would have induced the lambs to face an English spring I am too ignorant to say, but for the necessity of some such cordial in the sheep-fold I have the authority of a shepherd's wife in a bleak upland county in England. As to such beings as shepherdesses, I had supposed that they were mere fancy creatures invented by the writers of pastorals. However, I now discovered that beneath the

benigner skies of Australia not only was there no necessary connection between shepherds and crippled limbs, but that shepherdesses had had a very real existence, and that, if now extinct in the colony, it was only of late that they had become so.

At our friend's house we met two very charming young ladies, whose father had purchased land many years before, in a part of the bush so remote from other colonists that, when he first went there, the natives used to settle their quarrels close to his threshold, and his wife, on such occasions, would have to run out and catch up her younger children who might be playing in front of the house, for fear of accidental hurt from the spears, one or two of which, missing the aboriginal at whom they were aimed, would sometimes alight on the thatched roof, and stick there as in a pincushion.

There was no sort of labour suited to female hands which these young ladies had not attempted in the effort to lighten their father's first struggle with the wilderness, and the elder of the two told me that at sixteen years of age she and a younger sister had been his shepherdesses for many months, their successful care of the flock needing no other eulogy than the mention of the fact that, when relieved from their charge by a hired shepherd, more sheep died of "poison" in one month than in the whole previous six.

To those who own the sheep the task of hindering them from browsing upon "poison" is, as I have said, not only troublesome but very anxious, and my informant told me that if she had had to follow the flock any longer, she "thought that she should have gone crazy." It is

not only necessary to watch that the sheep shall not eat the pernicious plants, but also to be able to treat an animal that is suspected of having done so, as is the case when its eyes look heavy and dull; if it is then kept without water for two days there is a chance of its recovery, but if allowed to drink when in that state the body swells and death inevitably follows.

"Once," she said, "a good part of the flock wandered away, and for two days and nights my sister and I neither ate nor slept. We said nothing about it, but as soon as we could see each morning we opened the door softly and hurried out upon the search. At last we met a man who had seen our missing sheep, and he directed us which way to go. You cannot be too gentle in minding sheep; if you run after them you drive them away, and sheep have their regular times in the day when they like to lie down and be quiet, and then the shepherds can sit and rest in their huts. My sister and I had our own hut, where we sat and sewed and read the Bible together, and thought how like our life seemed to that of the people in Genesis. One of our brothers took care of the pigs and brought them home at night; fifty pigs is a great deal to be on the mind of a child of nine years old."

And then followed a humorous description of the dogs helping to get the pigs home, and of the especial trouble given by some individual pig, bigger than the rest, who would presume on his superior size to bully his youthful driver, and be only induced to go the right road at last when one of the dogs fairly dragged him into it by the ear. Though whether the ear, the shoulder, or the tail was chosen by the dog as the best spot upon which to

enforce the necessary discipline seemed to depend upon the manner in which he had been educated to the work, each several animal having his own especial method of persuasion from which he never departed.

Of the gentleness which is necessary in minding sheep another lady once gave me a good illustration. She was asked, she said, to look after the sheep in a home paddock for part of a day, during the absence of a servant, and wishing to do her best, was so very energetic in following them up and down, that the sheep, becoming suspicious of her motives, commenced running about, and two unlucky ones, more scared than the others, jumped the fence, and diving into the bush were never again heard of by their owner.

As to the care of pigs, and the anxiety which they cause to the young lads who are usually appointed to that office, I remember another incident which occurred under my own observation. A warder's wife in Barladong was desirous of obtaining employment in the immediate neighbourhood for one of her children, a grave taciturn boy of nine years old, and small for his age. She thought herself fortunate in hearing of a situation as "pig-boy" at a settler's about three miles distant, and at once made application for it on behalf of her son. Terms were agreed upon, and a stipulation was made that the boy should come home for the night every Saturday evening. The week passed over slowly to the anxious woman, and when the much-desired Saturday evening was arrived the lad returned to his happy mother, looking fat and well and quite satisfied with his new master. When bed-time came and the boy retired to his usual couch his mother

noticed that he did not fall asleep at once, but lay awake thinking solemnly about something or other which lay heavy on his mind. Next morning she asked him if he was unhappy about anything. "No," he said, "master's very good to me." She then inquired what he had been brooding over the night before. "O, about them pigs,—they *will* go just where I tell 'em not to go; they *will* get where I don't want 'em to get." Next Saturday it was still the same,—the boy's mind was quite haunted by the remembrance of the vagaries of his swinish flock. Still another week and another yet passed on, when suddenly, about Tuesday or Wednesday in the fifth week, the boy walked in, having run away from his place, as he owned. His mother scolded him for his behaviour, and asked him if anyone had been harsh or unkind. No, all had been kind to him. She tried to make out why he had left, but for a long time in vain; at length he threw his arms round her neck and sobbed out, "The pigs is *so* troublesome!"—they had fairly broken his heart at last.

CHAPTER VII.

Opinion of our shipmate on the subject of educating natives — Success of Roman Catholic bishop — Wesleyan Mission School — Its failure — Mrs. Camfield — Causes of her success with natives — Her difficulty in establishing her pupils in life — Anxiety of the Bishop of Perth to undertake guidance of institution at Albany, and to resign his See for that purpose — Petition to abandon project of resignation — Our inability to undertake missionary work at Barladong — Mingee and her mother — Protest against name of Sally — Mingee handed over to her betrothed — Mingee elopes with half-caste — Family complications — Khourabene left in charge of Parsonage — Dying native woman — Binnahan — Khourabene's opinion of legs — Native funeral — Hasty interment — Going to school — Hen and duckling — Quickness in learning to read — Backwardness in sewing — "Squeak" in boots — Forlorn little native — Names suitable to good society.

On board our ship, in the voyage to Western Australia, there had been an intermediate passenger who was returning thither after a few years' residence in England, and whom I often interrogated concerning the natives of the new country to which we were sailing. I was curious to know whether the "aborigines," as they are now styled, whom Captain Cook would in his older time have called "Indians," were capable of being taught and improved, and our shipmate answered that they could learn extremely well, "though it was but labour lost to educate them, as they were no sooner of an age to marry than they would run away from their instructors, and be off again to the bush." He added that the Roman Catholics had done more for the natives, and had obtained a greater

influence over them, than had been achieved in their behalf by any other sect of Christians, and that a Roman Catholic bishop, whose sole duty was the care of the natives, and who lived in the bush with his converts, had had considerable success amongst them. I inferred therefore, from what our shipmate said, that this bishop, whose name I did not then learn, had found that to benefit the poor savages it was necessary to adapt himself to their own manner of life, and to take up his abode in the bush with the flock that he desired to convert.

After we had been a short time settled in Barladong, the subject of the natives began to hang heavily upon us. They came and went perpetually, lived all around us, but had no religion, and it did not seem to be anybody's business to teach them one. On making inquiries of our neighbours, we were told that some years previously a school had been carried on in Barladong, under the conduct of a Wesleyan head, with the object of Christianizing and civilizing the native children, by instructing them both in religion and in the cultivation of the ground, and that a number of pupils, towards whose maintenance the colonial Government granted an allowance of a shilling each daily, had been collected together in a building which still bore the name of the Mission-house. Sickness, however, having soon appeared amongst them, many of the children died, and the remainder ran away.

The illness was said to have been caused by feeding the children too exclusively on rice, a diet which, however suitable for Hindoos, is perhaps as little qualified to be the principal food of an Australian as of an English native. The provision which Nature has given to the

former is the flesh of wild animals, and, as I have already shown, her hand has been so niggardly of any other food, that a vegetarian would probably find less in common between himself and an Australian, than with the inhabitants of any other part of the world. The climate itself seems to make the eating of meat a constitutional necessity, especially during the intense heats of summer, when, instead of the appetite for animal food being diminished, meat becomes more than ever palatable, so that in every settler's house it is put upon the table three times a day.

The school broke down, and had come to an end about ten years before we went to live in Barladong. A friend of ours once met a native woman who said that she had been one of the runaways, and held up her fingers eagerly to count upon them the number of children who had died. "Black fellow die—black fellow die," said she, as she touched one finger after another in the reckoning; "me run away—'fraid die too." Having finished her return of deaths, she went on to say "Black fellow sick—white lady fowl sendum—white lady kangaroo sendum—master all self eatum—" but here she paused and made an exception in favour of the matron, expressed by the words "Missis not eatum—missis good fellow."

This was all that we ever learned of the Barladong Wesleyan Mission, and we were never able to find any printed account of it, though we were told that there had been one in a Wesleyan magazine, headed with an engraving of the school side by side with a chapel, which was probably a stock frontispiece to missionary reports in

general, for no chapel had ever been attached to the institution. To the conscientiously sincere members of the sect, the failure of this school was so painful, that two of them whom I questioned on the subject told me plainly that they could not bear to think or speak about it.

We next learned that in the southern extremity of the colony, Mrs. Camfield, the wife of the resident magistrate of Albany, a town which is situated on the harbour of King George's Sound, had devoted many years of her life to the education of the native children, and that, after having commenced the good work unaided, she had been enabled to continue it by the help of a yearly grant from Government. The custom of early betrothals that prevails amongst the natives has been a great stumbling-block to their permanent improvement, and it is the necessary fulfilment of these imperative family contracts that has caused that constant disappointment of philanthropic schemes to which our fellow-passenger alluded when he said that as soon as boys and girls were past childhood they would invariably leave those who had brought them up, to run away into the bush.

But the natives, if strict in exacting the fulfilment of a promise to themselves, understand also how to keep one made to others, and Mrs. Camfield's invariable stipulation, in undertaking the charge of a child, is that its parents shall not at any future time demand it back, an agreement which is rendered binding in their opinion by a present of flour, or a small piece of money, as earnest or pledge of the bargain. I was told that she began by adopting one little native girl, and that she afterwards

extended her benevolence towards others until, by degrees, she collected round her a school which, when we were in the colony, consisted of some two dozen children.

The institution is on the model of an industrial one at home, all the housework and cookery being performed by the pupils, in addition to which they receive such an education as is usually imparted in National Schools in England. None of the inmates of Mrs. Camfield's home have ever run away from it, the secret of her art in retaining them being that she really loves the natives, and treats their children in all respects like those of white persons as to their clothing, diet, and lodging.

I heard that one day a native, who had lost his wife, came to Mrs. Camfield, bringing in his arms his poor motherless little baby, to entreat her to take charge of it; but, as the child seemed unlikely to live, she would not at first receive it, for several children in the school had lately died, and she feared that her institution might gain an ill name with the natives if any more deaths occurred. The man, however, came a second time, begging so urgently, with tears in his eyes, that she would consent to take the baby, that she found it impossible to refuse him any longer, and, under her care, the child lingered on for two or three months, gradually dwindling away until it died.

Mrs. Camfield's chief difficulty is how to settle her girls in life, for when grown up the inevitable question arises, Whom are they to marry? They cannot, after the training that they have received, take a savage husband; and though I believe two of her pupils have married

ticket-of-leave men, yet the prospects held out by such alliances are poor rewards for adopting Christian habits, and but sorry inducements for retaining them.

An attempt has been made to decide the knotty point by the modern panacea of emigration, and a short time before we returned to England a statement appeared in the newspapers, and received no contradiction, to the effect that Mrs. Camfield had received, from a missionary in another Australian colony, photographs of such of his young male converts as might prove eligible matches for the elder girls in her school, and that, the portraits being pronounced satisfactory, several of her pupils had been shipped to that colony and consigned to the missionary's care. At any rate a few of the girls emigrated, and the letters that Mrs. Camfield received from one of them, describing the voyage and its termination, might safely be adduced as satisfying for ever all doubts of the intelligence and capacity of the natives of Australia.

Of this one particular pupil, when a child, mention is made by Mrs. Smythe, in her 'Narrative of a Voyage to the Fiji Islands.' The ship having entered King George's Sound, she and Colonel Smythe paid a visit on the Sunday to Mrs. Camfield's school, and were much struck by the correctness with which this little native repeated the collect for the day. Mrs. Smythe also makes mention of having observed that the hair of some of the children was light-coloured in comparison with their skin, a fact of some importance in the vexed question of race.

Up to the time of our return no school or institution for the benefit of the natives in connection with the Church of England had been established in the colony, with the

exception of that at Albany, neither had either of the two great societies, the Church Missionary and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, founded any stations there. "It looks strange," wrote one of our correspondents, "to see no account of what is doing in Perth in the S. P. G. annual reports, *every other* colonial diocese being there mentioned."

Since our return to England, however, this neglect of the natives has weighed so heavily on the mind of the Bishop of Perth, that he has been anxious to resign his bishopric in order that he might place himself at the head of an earnest effort to gather in a flock of poor Western Australians, who might be Christianized and civilized in an establishment such as the one with which he was formerly connected at Poonindee in South Australia.

The school at Albany is rapidly dwindling away of late, and contained but fourteen children at the census of 1870. I believe that not only has the Government aid been withdrawn, but that Mrs. Camfield, who was the guiding spirit of the whole, has been unable to continue the good work which she had carried on so long and so well.

To quote the Bishop's words in the letter in which he announced his intention of resigning the see:—"I will mention first then, the great uneasiness of mind which I have always felt with reference to the native population of this colony, and the sanguine hope which I entertain that my removal to Albany may have the effect of not only preserving the native institution there from the extinction which seems now to be impending over it, but I think I may be enabled, under God's blessing, to give it something more than revived activity, and to

make it really useful to the rising generation of natives and half-castes in this colony."

The Bishop was begged to withdraw his resignation, and so large a number of the colonists joined in pressing this request upon him that he felt bound to yield, but now that attention has been drawn so strongly to the subject it is to be hoped most earnestly that something may be done at last, commensurate with the duty which lies before the colony, a duty long neglected and but lately even acknowledged.*

The Government occasionally distributes a few blankets to the natives at the beginning of the winter, and if a doctor's certificate is given to the effect that a native is helpless and ill, he is allowed weekly "rations" by an order from the magistrate. A prison has also been provided on the Island of Rottnest, for such native criminals as have offended against our laws, where they are employed in agriculture; and in the hope of putting an end to that custom of avenging a death by the slaughter of an unoffending person to which I have before referred, natives who had been convicted of observing it, were occasionally hanged.

What we ourselves could do for the aborigines was very little. Missionary work, to effect any good result, must be a person's sole care and occupation, and could not, in any degree worthy of the name, be carried on by a clergyman in the position of Government chaplain in Western Australia. Besides it was plain that any endeavours of ours to teach the natives must end in failure, situated as we were near a town where about nine men out of ten were of the con-

* By the latest mails we hear that a school is now established for the natives at Perth. (See Appendix.)

vict class, and where the character of the hotel tap-rooms was such as might be expected in consequence. We felt no doubt that we could succeed in assembling a school of native children, that is, if we fed and clothed them, but to do this we were not rich enough, even had our other avocations left us sufficient time for the exclusive attention that our pupils would have required. However, we thought that we could take one native child to bring up in our own house, more especially as Khourabene often visited us in company with a little niece, and had once asked us as a favour to let "Mingee" which was her name, signifying drought, remain all night at the parsonage whilst he went elsewhere.

The only drawback to poor Mingee was the existence of her mother, of whom the chief good that could be said was that she had a pretty face, since she was encroaching and tiresome, and required to be kept at arm's length. In the meantime the idea of his niece becoming one of our household gave great satisfaction to Khourabene. He could not imagine that his sister would make any difficulties, and undertook to fetch Mingee himself without delay. Accordingly he presented himself one morning, leading her solemnly by the hand in quite an unaccustomed manner, so that it was plain that he intended to go through a little ceremonial of his own getting up in entrusting her to our care. To make the scene more impressive, he accompanied it with a formal farewell, and, having lectured Mingee in our presence on the necessity of obedience and good behaviour, he took his leave at once, instead of remaining all day as usual, with a promise, however, that his absence should be but of short duration.

Reassured by the prospect of soon seeing her uncle again, Mingee seemed well contented to remain with us, and the inaugural ceremony of washing her face being gone through, we hoped that we might have good luck with our little black bargain. A few hours afterwards the dreaded mother appeared. She had answered so long to the name of Sally, that the people for whom she had occasionally fetched water took it rather ill of her that she had lately dubbed herself Annie, and would reply to no other appellation except under protest, and the same persons further objected to her that she called herself a lady, which is, however, a style that I have also known white women to assume on very insufficient grounds.

I saw no reason for taking exception at either of these peculiarities, but a third charge which was urged against her, *viz.* of greediness after money, proved insuperable on her explaining that she would allow us to keep Mingee on no other terms than that of paying a rather heavy weekly tribute to herself for the favour of feeding, clothing, and teaching her daughter. Thus our first trial dropped through, and two years afterwards poor Mingee was handed over to her betrothed, a middle-aged man with one wife already. This lady, who if she had been white would probably have shown herself an able champion of woman's rights, began to beat the bride two days after the wedding, and Mingee soon bettered herself by running away with a young half-caste of an age to suit her own, an evasion which the elder wife regarded with much complacency, and which was probably the end that she had in view when she first commenced hostilities.

The fugitives had both of them a leaning towards

civilized life, and a colonist for whom they sometimes worked was anxious to give them a cottage and a piece of ground for corn, in the hope of inducing the pair to remain with him as his permanent servants. But there were wheels within wheels in their destiny which forbade them to hope for a settled life. Not only might their door, if ever they possessed a house, be darkened by the middle-aged spouse, but the half-caste himself was beset with worse difficulties on his own account. His mother had long ago betrothed him to another native girl, and the fear of being knocked on the head by his nearest relations for contumaciously ignoring the agreement, condemned him and the girl of his own selection to an existence as unquiet as that of the Wandering Jew. So complicated are domestic affairs in a society where polygamy is lawful, and where the marriages are arranged solely by the parents.

I have already alluded once or twice to little Binnahan, and I will now relate how it was that she came to live under our roof. Some few months after the disappointment of our plans with respect to Mingee, my husband left home to attend one of the Perth clerical meetings, which were always in January, and Khourabene, according to custom, was deputed to mount guard over our house in its master's absence.

By way of making an imposing demonstration after dark, our sentry paraded in front of the house with a spear; and once when I returned from an evening walk with Rosa, I found that he had possessed himself of the broomstick which we used as a kitchen poker, and was shouldering it in the doorway in a manner that might

have reflected credit on a soldier on duty at the Horse Guards. The slightest sound at night sufficed to rouse him; and if I merely opened my door to let in our pet opossum he was awake directly, crying out from his lair of kangaroo skins in the verandah, "Hullo, mother! what's the matter?" His appreciation of being trusted kept him proof against all temptations to drink, and in spite of the vicinity of many public-houses, he never once got drunk when left in a post of responsibility.

Barladong deserved its reputation of a very scorching place in the summer-time, but it had this compensation that the heated granite on the top of Mount Douraking cooling faster after sunset than the ground in the valley, caused a current of air to come sweeping down to us at a certain fixed hour every evening, and made our nights deliciously cool. If, however, there were bush-fires on every side, encircling us in a calm smoky atmosphere, the rocky hill was unable to radiate its heat so quickly, and we were deprived of our evening breeze. On such nights the stars on the horizon shone but very dimly, and an aromatic scent hung in the air from the burning of the great forest trees belonging to the same order as the myrtle.

It was after a day of intense heat, followed by no night breeze, that I summoned up courage to take a walk with Rosa, just as darkness had fallen and a dull red line was all that marked the west. Our way led past the convict depôt and the house of the colonial surgeon, below which, on a bank sloping towards the river, often stood one or two lonely huts containing sick natives, who were brought thither by their friends for the benefit of medical assist-

ance. A fire was burning here, betokening the presence of an invalid on this particular evening, and as Rosa and I leaned over the bridge watching the flicker of the fire-light in the dry river bed, a man standing near the wooden piers, who had recognized me, looked up, and told me that a native woman lay very ill in a hut below.

On hearing this Rosa and I turned off the bridge, and went down the bank to see if we could offer her any help. We found, to our regret, that the sick woman was one with whom we were well acquainted, and her evidently hopeless state somewhat surprised us, as poor "Kitty" had called at our house in good health not very long before. Her intelligence was above the average, and a stranger from England, whose impressions of Australian natives had been solely derived from books, would have probably supposed, on seeing her neatly dressed and waiting at table, that she was a West Indian mulatto, excepting for the softness of her hair. I had been so much struck with her appearance on one such occasion as afterwards to feel surprised on receiving a visit from her attired in nothing but the native costume of a long fur mantle over one shoulder and under the other; but I found that, just in the same way as European ladies put on their travelling dresses, natives assume the kangaroo skin when about to make a journey.

I came up to the hut where she was now lying on the ground, and the sight of me appeared to gratify the poor creature, for it was plain that she had something to say to me, and that she might the better do so her husband raised her and supported her in a sitting posture, when with much difficulty she pronounced the words, "Will you take

my little girl?" The man completed the sentence for her, by explaining that she knew herself to be dying, and wanted me to take charge of Binnahan, their only child. I said at once that I would do so, feeling inwardly certain of my husband's consent, but she seemed at first almost afraid to believe me; and the man tried to reassure her, by saying in the native language, that I "was not telling lies." However, I did not leave her until I had tranquillized her mind with the repeated assurance that in case of her death her little daughter should live with us.

Now it so happened that at the clerical meeting, amongst other subjects of discussion, the duties of Government chaplains towards the natives had occupied much attention, and my husband, amongst others of the clergy, had expressed an opinion that the natives were sadly neglected, and ought to be so no longer. Poor Kitty's request, which I communicated to him on his return, was a speedier test of sincerity than he had anticipated, although it was one from which he had no thought of flinching; he therefore went immediately to the riverside, and telling her he was come to hear her wishes that he might endeavour to fulfil them, she just gasped out the words, "Take Binnahan—make good." She lingered a day or two longer, but on the following morning a little girl, whose only clothing was a small piece of cotton print pinned round her, peeped timidly and without speaking into the room where I was sitting, to let me know that she had arrived.

She was a very slight little creature, with the thin limbs of her wild race, in fact the natives in general were

so slim that I remember Khourabene's ideas of art being much offended by a picture of savages in the 'Illustrated London News,' which had represented them all with large calves to their legs, and he pointed out the defect, perhaps I ought rather to say superfluity, with very great disdain. I supposed that she might be seven years old, but as she had changed all her first teeth, she was evidently older than she looked. Her skin, like that of the children at Albany whom Mrs. Smythe had noticed, was darker than her hair, which was soft and curly, setting off by its lighter colour the line of jet-black eyebrow and the dark expressive eyes below.

She shared the Malay nose and mouth with her countrymen in general, a type of feature which is unfortunately far more commonly found amongst them than fine hair, and which imparts to the countenance a sullen look even when there is no real sullenness in the temper; but nature's even hand makes amends for this by the brilliancy of the teeth and eyes, so that a smile on a native face is like a flash of light. Although she was quite clean, I could not sufficiently divest my mind of home traditions to suppose otherwise than that to wash her must be the first thing to be done, so Rosa and I put her in a bath; but as she had arrived before I had been able to prepare her wardrobe, to dress her on leaving the tub was a matter far more difficult. I had managed, however, by sundown to complete an overall pinafore, in which she immediately started off to exhibit herself to her parents, returning to sleep at our house, which from that day forth became her home.

Two mornings afterwards, just as the sun had risen, a

pair of little black cousins appeared at our door; there was no need to ask why they had come so early, as the grief in their faces betrayed their errand, and poor little Binnahan, throwing herself face downwards on Rosa's bed, moaned aloud as though her heart was broken. She went away with the two girls as soon as the first burst of grief was over, and about an hour afterwards some native women came to ask me if I would give them a covering to lay over poor Kitty in her grave. This was the only time that I ever had a similar request, and I sent them away much gratified with a piece of white calico. We had once had a sadder petition preferred to us by some natives; it was for the loan of our wheelbarrow to convey to her grave a woman who had been speared a few hours before, and whom we had seen at our door that morning alive and well, and had noticed as being remarkably handsome.

I went down to the river-side, soon after sending the white covering, that I might see the last of Binnahan's poor mother. I should have known, even at a distance, that there had been a death amongst the natives, from the monotonous wailing noise that is always raised on such occasions until after the funeral, with a view of keeping off the evil spirit Jingy, the official mourner being relieved, when wearied, by others in uninterrupted succession until the grave is closed. A fat old woman, thus enacting the part of exorcist when I got to the place, was doing so with all her might, shaking her hands incessantly from the wrists in a despairing manner, whilst she uttered her cries until the perspiration streamed off her face with heat and fatigue. Altogether she offered

as wide a contrast as could be imagined to the mutes who are hired to stand at the doors of the house in a ceremonious English funeral.

The corpse was laid on its side, as if asleep, beneath a bower of green branches, of which the husband, with the tears running down his black cheeks, removed a few, that I might look at his poor dead wife. I should not have known that she was dead as, owing to the dark skin, my unpractised eye could not detect the change in the complexion and appearance caused by death.

It is customary amongst the natives to bury the dead in a sitting posture; the nails of the corpse are also burnt off before burial, and the hands tied together, and Binnahan seemed pleased to tell me that with regard to her mother the ceremony of burning the nails had been omitted; both that and the tying of the hands are said to be measures of precaution lest the deceased should work his or her way up again to the world's surface, and alarm the living not only by "walking," but, if a man, by using his spears (which are always buried with him) upon his former friends. As the funeral follows close upon the death, the practice of burning off the nails must at least possess, one would think, the recommendation of deciding any doubt about life being extinct or merely suspended, and a native whom we heard of as having shouldered himself out of the ground, above which he lived for some time afterwards, may possibly have owed his revival to these last offices of his somewhat hasty friends.

I now did my best to make a proper suit of clothes for Binnahan, preparatory to sending her to the Government school, during which interval she was constantly visited

by her cousins and her aunt, the latter giving me to understand, with the air of a person who makes a family arrangement, that the girls should leave off coming as soon as her niece had recovered her spirits, or, as the good lady expressed it, "when Binnahan never more mother thinkum." I was glad, however, to find that this period of forgetfulness did not arrive. The child's grief soon exhausted itself, but so far from forgetting her mother, she never seemed better pleased than to be reminded of her.

I could not help laughing at myself the first time that my new charge started for school. Rosa's two little sisters good-naturedly came to act as convoy, but the black cousins, whom I had not invited, appeared also, and fell into the ranks of the escort. Now the whole party was barefoot, and Binnahan's preference for going to school as the crow flies necessitated a short cut over stubble fields, from which the white feet instinctively shrank, but which seemed good smooth walking to the hard little hoofs of the others.

I had heard so much of the invincible attractions of the bush, and the impossibility of preventing a native from running back to it, that my mind misgave me on the point about which I had least for fear, namely, that she would not return at dinner-time but rather take pot-luck with her relations on some chance dolghite or opossum. Whilst I stood watching in our verandah, with the anxiety of a hen looking after a foster-duckling, the party divided, adding thereby much to my uncertainties; but afternoon arrived, and with it came Binnahan, in a more than contented frame of mind, for she seemed extremely pleased with the step that she had ascended on life's ladder.

She learned to read very rapidly, the quick sight possessed by all natives no doubt much assisting her; in fact, when her father came to see her after she had been with us for a few months, she read aloud to him at such great length, to convince him of her progress, that his face exhibited in succession the three phases of delight, astonishment, and weariness, reminding me of the sensations ascribed by Johnson to the readers of 'Hudibras.'

I wish that I could have said that her energy in learning to sew equalled that shown in her efforts to master the mysteries of reading; her backwardness in needlework being the more provoking as her eye was so correct. She would come in from an hour's play in the garden to exhibit herself to me in a mantle of green leaves, put together in excellent shape with small bits of stick broken to the size of pins, but to construct a piece of dress by making a multitude of neat stitches appeared to require a perseverance in which her disposition was defective. I doubt, however, whether an Anglo-Saxon would have done much better who had spent the first eight or nine years of life without settled occupations or civilized habits.

The same keen sight, that enabled her so quickly to acquire a knowledge of the alphabet, soon made her acquainted with the figures on the clock's face, which at half-past twelve she described as being "cut in two, all same damper" (dampers or bush bread being of a muffin shape), but I found much difficulty in teaching her how to tell the time correctly. I could however always trust to her to bring me an accurate description of the relative positions of the two hands if I wanted to know the hour.

Binnahan's father, being a native shepherd, and there-

fore not without a few shillings in his pocket, was anxious to commemorate this first visit to his daughter by buying her a present, for which he fancied that nothing could be so appropriate as a pair of shoes. His ideas of fitness, however, did not jump with mine. I had wished, if possible, to keep out of Binnahan's head for a year, at least, all thoughts of either shoes or boots, as they were expensive and unnecessary articles of dress. Even on Sundays many well-dressed children came to school barefoot, the smartness of whose appearance was in no way diminished by their shapely bare legs and feet, whilst those who wore boots, on that day and no other, limped like young colts that have been shod by a clumsy blacksmith.

However, the father was not to be gainsaid, and brought from a store not only a pair of shoes but also of stockings. About an hour afterwards I went into the kitchen and found both him and Binnahan silent and melancholy, as if a life's hopes had been frustrated; the shoes were a misfit, and the store contained none of a proper size; the stockings also were big enough for a woman. I cheered up the desponding pair by representing that the shoes could be exchanged for a frock, and that the stockings might be saved until their owner should grow big enough to fill them, and thus we managed to stave off an artificial want for a while longer, but luxurious habits increasing in Barladong, and Sunday boots becoming general amongst Binnahan's schoolfellows, we would not permit her to be mortified by going to church barefoot, and so sent for the shoemaker. "And please, missis," she said in an eager whisper as I was directing how the boots should be made, "be sure to tell him to put squeak into

them." Her delight on first getting the boots was really pretty to see; she flung her arms round me with joy, the boots squeaking as if in sympathy, but they developed a feature that we had scarcely noticed hitherto, and Binnahan's heels now plainly showed themselves to be of a greater length than those of a white person.

The natives of Western Australia are extremely impressionable to religious instruction, but Binnahan's unquestioning faith did not prevent her from occasionally making very quaint observations on what she was taught. As, for instance, she once asked Rosa what angels had to eat in heaven, and receiving for reply that they eat nothing, rather than the more simple answer that nothing had been revealed on the subject, the removal of one difficulty only paved the way for another, and, in much perplexity, the querist said—"Then are they always *gorbel moorat?*" (*i. e.* stomach-full.) Another time she asked if her dead brothers and sisters were gone to heaven, and being told that all innocent children would be there, she remarked, "Little kangaroo do no harm—little kangaroo go too?"

Not very long after our taking Binnahan there came to the parsonage one day another native child, who announced that she was going to live with us, and followed me about from room to room, as if incapable of comprehending the denial which I was forced to give her. It was a friendless little creature, who did not look more than five years old, and who, having no mother, roamed hither and thither in company sometimes of one, sometimes of another of her relations.

The last time that I saw her was in chilly wet weather,

and I tied round her poor little waist a petticoat which Binnahan had outgrown, but I almost repented of having done so when I saw at a little distance a native woman, whom she had accompanied, denuding the child's shoulders of its fur cape, the petticoat being considered quite sufficient clothing without other addition. I heard that the child died soon afterwards; but I had also reason to believe that it was not before a kind priest from the Benedictine Mission of New Norcia, an account of which will be found hereafter, had found and taken pity on the poor forlorn little one.

The next occasion of our being asked to adopt a child had a touch of the absurd. The wife of a convict who had been sent to prison for a fresh offence, applied to us for assistance on being thus thrown, of a sudden, upon her own resources, and the second time that she came for relief she brought with her a pretty little girl of two years old, her only child, and gravely requested me to adopt it. She had bestowed upon it, at its christening, so great a variety of fine names that I could not help thinking that she must have cherished from its birth an idea of effecting some such transfer as that which she now proposed to me, and that she had been under the impression that the names of Angelina and Elfrida, which she had given it, would prove as good as a little dowry, and would confer on their possessor a claim to a higher grade of life.

CHAPTER VIII.

Length of summer and winter — Rapid change of weather — Bull-frog — Perplexing sounds — Healthiness of hot weather — No palliatives to heat except sea-breeze — Flies — Ants — Housekeeping difficulties — Fleas — Flowers — Raspberry-jam blossoms — Cow-keeping — Goats and Sabbatarianism — Churning — Scarcity of cheese — Cow-tenting — Bells and herd attractive to cow — Sameness of diet — Australian mutton tastes differently to English mutton — Bunbury beef — Pink everlastings — Road making and mending — "Governor Hampton's cheeses" — Horses and foals — Colonial gates — Aptness of horses to stray — Horse hunting — Obliged to hobble our horse — Horse gets rid of side-saddle — "Gum-suckers" — Headlong riders — Eating a *dolghite* — Description of one — Evergreen trees — Clearness of atmosphere — "Choosing frocks out of the sky" — Southern Cross — Thunder-storms — Chimney struck — Twisted trees do not attract lightning — Suitability of climate to consumptive patients — Peculiarities of climate — Bishop Salvado's opinion of it.

THE length of the summers in Western Australia was somewhat variable, taking one year with another. The hot weather usually began in November, though I have also known it to commence a month earlier: and there was a similar degree of irregularity with regard to the setting-in of the winter rains. I remember that one season they began upon the 31st of March, and in another that the heat continued very great till the 17th of April, when a thunder-storm occurred and broke up the weather; but the transition from summer and excessive drought to a moist and rainy time was seldom otherwise than sudden.

Nothing more instantaneously marked the change of seasons than the sound of the bull-frog, whose business it

seemed, like the bull in the funeral of Cock Robin, to toll the knell of the departed summer on the evening of the first rainy day. If the winter thus announced had been one of ice and snow, there would have been something most lugubrious in the bull-frog's way of heralding it, but sounds depend much for their effect upon the circumstances with which we mentally associate them. The chirping of the grasshopper, for instance, was disliked by Rosa, "because it reminded her of summer," although the very recollection of summer, with which the sound of the chirp is associated, has probably been one of the chief reasons that has made the lively little singer so popular with poetical writers. Summer, however, as she appears in English hedgerows and in the Australian bush, wears two distinct aspects, and to a servant's mind the idea of that season in Swan River is connected with little else than the remembrance of intense heat, that converts each ordinary household task, in scholastic language, into "an imposition."

In the course of a few weeks the frog seemed to cheer up a little, or to give place to a musician in better spirits; for his one continuous mournful note, sounding each time as if shot out of his lungs on a sudden, was changed to three lively ones, so unlike any which we had ever heard from frogs before that we could not for several nights determine by what agency they were really produced. These notes had such a metallic sound that at first I thought the noise came from a blacksmith's shop, whilst my husband was equally certain that it was a distant cracked piano; eventually I renounced the notion of the anvil in favour of a jew's-harp, and to this

last comparison I adhered, even after we became aware that frogs were the performers.

The rapid lowering of the temperature that accompanied the change from summer to winter was trying to most persons, shown in nothing so much as in the frequent prevalence of dysentery in the month of May. In fact there never seemed to be so complete an absence of illness in Barladong as in the summer, when the ground was as hard with heat as if it had been frozen, and bad smells were impossible in air which was dry as that of an oven: when what had been pretty flower-gardens looked no better than patches of stubble, and 80° Fahrenheit was by comparison cool and comfortable, rather than oppressive.

When the thermometer was standing at from 96° to 107° in the shade, and people were obliged, notwithstanding, to work in the harvest-field, and to cook dinners, the battle of life might be said to have commenced in good earnest; a fact which the very fowls acknowledged by going about with all their feathers in a ruffle, holding them as it were off their skin, in hopes that a little fresh air might penetrate. In such weather labour was a severe trial, but still it was not unhealthy, that is, we very seldom heard of sunstroke or of any other sickness; but I cannot help thinking that life must wear out faster for such exposure, and it is certain that youthful looks are far more fleeting than in England.

Of means and appliances for making the heat more endurable there are scarcely any. I never saw but one punkah in the colony, nor was ice ever to be seen except at the Governor's, who possessed a freezing machine.

The sea-breeze is the only palliative, and over the sixty parched miles that lay between us and the sea-shore it came sweeping up almost every afternoon that the summer lasted. Our house did not even boast the advantage of a cellar, and yet, in consequence of the dry atmosphere, the keeping of meat was less difficult than during hot weather in England; the grand obstacle, in fact, lying less in the heat than in the flies, of which it is impossible to exaggerate the annoyance. Often, unless we devoured our dinner with a Transatlantic haste, the state of our plates, even before our hunger was satisfied, was such as must be guessed rather than described; the principal dish also falling such an easy prey to our tormentors as to make the expression *pièce de résistance* a contradiction in terms.

Wire covers were much in vogue for protecting the eatables, but we soon gave them up as useless, finding that the flies passed under them with ease upon tables that were never level in a climate that warped all articles of wood, and we therefore preferred, whilst we sat at dinner, to keep the joint covered with a napkin, in which, the instant that we had finished our repast, it was rolled up bodily, as if in readiness for a pic-nic, the bundle being then tied closely in a thick sack, and suspended in the verandah for the night. Nor was meat by any means the only object attacked by the flies; even unskimmed milk was not always safe from them, and so much time was consumed in mere precautionary measures that there were days when a housekeeper felt almost in despair.

Ants, too, would perplex us, especially a tiny sort of

black ant, which would swarm over our provisions, and even get into tin canisters which had been placed for security upon tables standing with their four legs in water. It took some pains to discover how the ants managed to circumvent the saucers of water, but we found that the spiders were their engineers, and that the ants had passed over the cobwebs which they had stretched between the wall and the table.

House-flies were so numerous that they left ugly traces of themselves upon all that was not originally black, destroying wall-papers and the binding of books; everything, in fact, which could not be restored with soap and water. 'Ladies' bonnets and white muslin dresses lost their freshness unless stowed away on the instant that they were taken off, and if people were not perpetually cleaning their windows and looking-glasses they refused either to reflect or to be seen through. A neighbour of ours, who said that he could never see to read a book unless he cleaned a window first, wishing the world thereby to understand what an exceedingly idle wife he had, chose but a poor, and I may say unfair illustration of his lady's failings, so infinitely less idleness being required to produce a similar effect in Western Australia than would be the case in England.

The time at which the house-flies gave us really the most vexation was in our mid-day rest, when they rendered sleep quite impossible unless the bed was protected as against mosquitoes, of which last we had but few, excepting close to the river-side or in the neighbourhood of swampy land.

But we had this consolation, that all the pests did not

come together. Ants were busiest in summer-time, but intense heat lessened the house-flies considerably, and in July and August even blue-bottles seemed to be ready to lay down their arms and to proclaim a two months' truce. However, what we gained in one way we lost in another, for at the precise period when the last-named enemies discontinued their hostilities the fleas proclaimed war, and that in such a manner as to leave no doubt in a reasonable mind that their design, had their power equalled their blood-thirstiness, was the extermination of the whole human race.

At home fleas are generally supposed to beat a retreat before cleanly housemaids, and to a certain extent even in Western Australia they have an aversion to the use of buckets and brooms; but in spite of unremitting scrubbings and sweepings, the fleas, with apparently "nil desperandum" for their motto, caused us such nights of broken rest that, in suffering from their misdirected energy, we wished often and devoutly that the excellent man who founded a school of industry for them in London, had thought fit to establish a branch seminary in a colony where so much larger a class existed of those whom he sought to educate.

With the first commencement of rainy weather the mignonette would begin to flower and the peach-trees to blossom in our garden. It is curious to observe of the latter that those trees which have been propagated by grafts invariably lose their leaves at the end of summer, whereas seedling peaches follow the laws of the indigenous trees and preserve their foliage. As the rainy weather continues, flowering bulbs of all kinds, which have been

imported from England and the Cape, ixias especially, appear in the greatest beauty; both they and the annuals which we are accustomed to see at home, as well as the large scarlet geraniums, revelling in a season which though possessing the name of winter has none of its home characteristics. Whilst this transformation was effecting in the gardens, which had lately looked so desolate, the bush was not behindhand in assuming a new appearance. The wattle, which is one species of the many kinds of Australian acacia, led the van amongst the indigenous flowering trees, and showed its pale yellow blossoms before May was over. Later in the rainy season the wattle was outvied by the acacia called the "raspberry jam," the flowers of which are of the brightest gold colour and grow in such abundant clusters that some of these trees appear better furnished with flowers than leaves. One variety droops like a weeping willow, so that when in bloom every separate spray is a long hanging wreath, "waving its yellow hair," as Moore says of the acacias in Arabia. All the jam-trees are in their chief beauty in September, a time of year when heavy westerly gales often occur, bringing with them sharp sudden storms of rain, broken by bright gleams of sunshine. On such days to stand upon a hill-side that commands a tract covered with these trees, their flowers at one moment obscured by the driving rain and wind, and at the next brilliantly lighted up by the sun, is a sight not soon to be forgotten. Many of the acacias which I have been describing reach the height of 40 feet at least, and are sometimes much overgrown by a thick parasite with long trailing twigs, bearing a red waxy-looking flower at Christmas-time.

Those persons who kept cows were always glad when they calved early in the winter months, first because there was then a probability of plenty of grass by the time that the calf could eat it, and next because they thus secured as long a time as possible before the heat prevented them from churning. It must not be supposed that grass, in the common acceptation of the word, is often made into hay; what were called hayfields in our part of Western Australia were for the most part wheat or oat crops, sown to be used as hay, and cut green as soon as they came into flower. Pasture of all kinds was in fact very precious, and we, who generally had a fair amount of grass in the winter, were exposed to much annoyance from neighbours who made a practice of keeping live-stock without the means of feeding it at their own expense. There is no need, however, to visit Australia in order to find similar stock-owners. In an English village I have known dumb animals to be kept in good condition under precisely parallel circumstances, and a removal of their owner in consequence to a Government institution naïvely described to us as "Penton Villa" by his friends. Neither he nor his friends, however, took up religious grounds in pleading excuses for his fancy of feeding his live-stock at his neighbour's granary. But one lives and learns. An old pensioner, whose children had more than once brought pigs into our field and depastured them there as on a common, deliberately tethered his goats upon our ground on one especial Sunday, and because another person pulled up the tether pins and told us of the trespass, the proprietor of the goats appeared at our door as an aggrieved party very early on Monday morning, with a request to

see "his Reverence." I asked whether the case was not one in which a lady would do as well as the clergyman; my visitor replied that it possibly might be such an one, "if like St. Paul, ma'am, you will hear me patiently," and down sat the pensioner as if determined to enact the image of patience herself. "I want to know, ma'am," he began, "by what rule or authority Pensioner Brown dares to pull up the tether of my goats in his Reverence's fields?" I evaded the question by begging to be informed what business the goats had had there, and he answered that "it was the Sabbath day." Upon this I reminded him that he had asked no permission from us, and my observation appeared at once to furnish him with a mode of defence. "I could not ask permission, ma'am," he answered in a virtuously injured manner, "it was the Sabbath day, ma'am. You know, ma'am," he continued, "the Bible says we may *feed* our beasts upon that day," and here he lowered his voice condescendingly on account of my probable ignorance of the passage to which he referred, "but ask *leave* on the Sabbath to tether them?" (and at this point his tones rose high with moral indignation,) "O, dear no, ma'am, *I* could not *think* of doing no such thing!"

We were often struck by the regularity with which two or three days of rain almost always occurred in the otherwise hot and dry month of February, generally about the thirteenth; a most beneficent provision of nature, enabling the farmers to sow their fields some weeks before the regular rains set in, since this, which was called the first rain, was followed by a return of extreme heat. Churning ends towards the beginning of November, and though I

have heard of ladies who continued the practice of it daily throughout the summer, yet, as no ice is procurable, the substitute of cream, scalded in the Devonshire fashion, looks at that season far more inviting and appetizing than the semi-liquefied butter. But, as a general rule, all dairy produce was very costly "over the hills," the price of butter, whether salt or fresh, being half-a-crown a pound, and milk being so scarce as to be often obtained with the greatest difficulty. Cheese, when it could be bought, often cost nearly as much as butter, but it was only at distant intervals that we were able to procure it, and the absence of this sheet anchor of the English larder perplexed me sorely when I commenced my colonial house-keeping. If a stranger breakfasted with us the sight of milk always provoked more or less comment upon its scarcity, and discussions of the comparative merits of cows and goats. The latter are more commonly kept than cows, and that both should be dry is a still commoner occurrence. Goat's milk is so rich that, if not intended for sale, one feels it no crime to water it; but to milk a goat is back-aching work, and makes one wish that the creatures stood upon a pedestal.

I once found a little fair girl watching a goat and two kids by the road-side, and the group looked so pretty that I stopped to admire the flock and its shepherdess, when she, laying her hand caressingly upon one of the buff-coloured innocents, dispersed my romance with the words "We shall have *this* for dinner next Sunday." The usual feeding-ground of the cattle belonging to the pensioners and other towns-people of Barladong was what was called the "Government run," a phrase which denoted all such

bush in the vicinity as had not been appropriated to private holders. A poor old fellow, who had been a convict, eked out a scanty living by acting as cow-tender to this miscellaneous herd, consisting of some twenty-five head of rawboned cattle, mostly young stirks, which he drove out every morning and brought home again at night. For the care of each animal the cow-tender received twopence a week from its owner, and lived on the proceeds of his gains in a little mud hut which no English person would have supposed to be the residence of a human being, excepting for the fact that a little clay oven stood beside it. As each beast wore a bell upon its neck, in order that its whereabouts amongst the trees and stony heights might be ascertained, there was an amount of merry tinkling, when the herd started at sunrise, which sometimes proved so fascinating to our cow in her field, that she would jump the fence in a most spirited and hunter-like fashion in order to make one of the party. The exhilarating noise, however, must have been almost the only attraction, for the much-frequented "Government run" afforded scarcely any pasture, excepting in the winter. A fixed determination to calve in the bush was another of our cow's peculiarities, and on one such occasion neither she nor her calf could be discovered until after much search, and the promise of five shillings to the person who should find her. She reappeared at the end of several days with a very fine calf, followed by a little Irish boy who had found out her hiding place in a thicket at two miles distance.

If we had not kept an abundant supply of poultry, and secured ourselves also a regular supply of milk by giving

our cow bran mashes throughout the greater part of the year, the lack of cheese and vegetables would have restricted our bill of fare almost entirely to mutton. This last is of excellent quality, and the perceptible difference of taste that it possesses to English mutton has led, perhaps, to the colonial opinion (in which I do not coincide) that the flavour is much superior to that of mutton at home. The dried-up appearance of the sheep-runs, in summer, causes a new-comer to wonder what the sheep can find to eat upon them, until his eye ceases to regard the colour of green as an indispensable accompaniment to the existence of grass. In so vast a country as Western Australia, however, the description of one part of it cannot serve as a picture for the whole. Some travellers overland to Albany, (who had left Barladong in its parched mid-summer condition, and who wrote us an account of their eleven days' journey,) described the delight which they felt at finding an abundance of fresh grass and lovely flowers at that season of the year in the cooler southern districts. The district of the Vasse in the south-west of the colony, where I have been told that a blanket is never willingly dispensed with for the whole of even one night throughout the year, produces very good cheese; and the beef which the neighbouring district of Bunbury supplies to Perth at Christmas would do credit to a London market.

The bush immediately around us showed very little variety in the low-growing flowers, whole tracts being covered with nothing but pink everlastings in such immense profusion as to redden the ground at a distance. There were also yellow everlastings very large and double,

and a flower which children call "kangaroo foot," (being shaped like one,) the right name of which is *marsupia mirabilis.* In the latter end of the winter months it was a great pleasure to set aside some particular afternoon for the purpose of taking a party of children into the bush to gather everlastings, and to drink tea out of doors. The favourite spot was Mount Douraking, where we could sit and watch the effect of sunset over the vast forest, whilst the half-dozen children whom we had taken with us, Binnahan as eager as the rest, ran about, remaining out of sight until they could reappear in triumph upon a high mass of rock above us, with their arms full of rose-coloured flowers.

In many bush huts, when the women have a taste for decoration, pink everlastings are tied up in thick bunches and inserted in a close compact row between the top of the hut wall and the sloping edge of the unceiled rafters, so as to form a cornice, beautiful in itself, and also in picturesque harmony with the rude materials of the dwellings.

It need scarcely be said that the season of the flowers is the pleasantest time either for riding or driving in the bush, and perhaps the forest was never more attractive than in the month of July, when each individual red gum-tree looked like an enormous flowering myrtle, and was covered to its very summit with white blossoms. But at that period of mid-winter the days were short and the roads were in many places full of miry holes, and we therefore preferred to postpone our distant excursions until the flowers upon the trees were fading and those upon the ground were in perfection. It was a matter of some surprise to us, at first, that large portions of the roads should

be so bad in spite of the many parties of convicts employed upon them, but to provide occupation for the men at a distance from the temptations of the towns was naturally the prime object with the Government, whilst the state of the highways was a secondary consideration to the colonists who undertook the Government contracts, compared with the ready-money which was received for feeding the men.*

The persons on whom at that time the direction both of the making and repairing of the roads chiefly, if not entirely, devolved were the warders, (I remember a bandmaster having the charge of a road party,) whose opportunities of acquiring a knowledge of the business had been probably about equal to those of the pickpockets for whom they laid out the work. The principle on which the roads were mended was to spend a great number of months on one spot, improving a tract of two or three miles, and then to remove the men to a distance, it may be of twenty, leaving the improved bit as an oasis that allowed the driver of a dog-cart the luxury of half an hour's fast trotting. In a few months' time the oasis would present a spectacle far worse than if it had never been meddled with, and at every hundred yards or oftener the dog-cart would have to make a fresh track for itself amongst the trees that grew alongside the so-called thoroughfare. I may make an exception, however, in favour of an application of wooden pavement by means of which the old sandy fur-

* Since our return to England the management of the roads has been placed upon an entirely new system. A "road-board" is now formed in each district, consisting of the principal inhabitants; a certain amount of convict labour is placed at its disposal by the Government, and the control over the highways is lodged in its hands.

rows between Perth and Green Mount are now replaced by a good solid causeway fit for fast travelling. The miles of sand over which I passed when this road was in its transition state have since been bottomed with sections of great forest trees, the shape and size of which are best described by their ordinary name of "Governor Hampton's Cheeses." They were laid down during his term of office, and have produced a result which must dispose all travellers, who had ever passed over the road in its original condition, to bestow on him a benediction as on a second "General Wade."

Nothing surprised me more than the much greater amount of work which is got out of horses in Australia than in England, especially when the comparatively small amount of care bestowed upon them is taken into consideration. Whereas the horse of an English gentleman is kept with as much precision as if intended for exhibition in a glass-case, Australian horses are really treated with no more ceremony than at home falls to the lot of a donkey. In all seasons and in all sorts of weather they are left in the open fields or in the bush; they seem equally to disregard the storms and rain of winter and the burning suns of summer, and even when the shelter of a shed or stable is at their command, they appear to prefer exposure. Often one sees them hung by the bridle upon a gate-post for hours together, or standing harnessed at some door for an indefinite amount of time, without even a boy at their head. Mares with young foals are ridden or driven as the convenience of their owners may dictate, but then, to make amends, the foal has the privilege of joining the party.

The first day after I got to Barladong we saw a string of equestrians, male and female, coming over the high narrow bridge, one of the ladies being mounted on a mare closely followed by a foal which had, as I afterwards learned, thus ambled forty miles in company with its parent. Our English eyes thought this sufficiently strange, but they were still more astonished when a neighbour drove up to our house in a "trap" with a foal running behind like an awkward overgrown puppy. Our experience of its vagaries did not tend to dispel the notion that we had brought from England that foals were best left at home; in fact, it seemed to us a case of too much being taken for granted on both sides, the master supposing that during his half-hour's visit to us the mare would feel it incumbent on her to look after the foal, whilst the foal, with a hypothesis of its own that there was plenty of time to spare, went making calls all round the town and looking into every farm-yard, in preference to remaining with its mother. When our visitor bade us farewell and we accompanied him to our slip-rail, where his trap was standing, to see him safely off, no foal was there; we were therefore compelled to send our man in search of the young vagabond, who found it, after an hour's chace, at the police barracks on the other side of the river.

I have already spoken of slip-rails as makeshifts consequent upon the scarcity of clever carpenters; but it sometimes happens that when one of the guild is forthcoming who can put a gate together, another obstacle arises from the difficulty of procuring hinges. In this case colonial invention supplies the place of a lower

hinge by a glass bottle, care being specially taken to select one which, with regard to its original purpose, would have been censured as unreasonably dishonest as to the cavity at the bottom. The bottle is then buried beside the gate-post neck downwards, and the lower end of the upright of the gate being made longer than the other is set within the hollow bottom. An upper hinge is contrived by passing the topmost end of the upright through a round hole in a piece of board nailed on the summit of the gate-post. Such primitive hinges answer much better and last much longer than anyone would be inclined to suppose, and are often seen upon newly-cleared farms. Inverted bitter-beer bottles buried in a row to half their length are also used in some colonial gardens as edgings to flower-beds. If the rails of fences are not kept in the most perfect condition, and made of sound strong wood, the owners of horses are constantly inconvenienced by their getting away into the bush, where, joining company with others, they will often run wild for months together. As most of the horses have been foaled in the bush, and their first impulse on regaining their freedom is to hanker after youthful scenes, it is generally possible to guess the direction in which the animal will travel, and, if no time is lost in sending a native to track the hoof-marks, a few hours will suffice for its recapture, even in the driest weather; otherwise the proprietor has to trust to accidental information for learning his horse's whereabouts, and when this is ascertained he must furthermore expend a guinea in having him "brought in." The sum may seem vexatiously heavy to pay, but is fairly earned, for horse hunting requires such hard and

reckless riding that few men who have passed their first youth retain sufficient nerve for the business.

Ground that is strewed with lumps of broken granite must be galloped over as unhesitatingly as if it were English turf in a chase where the advantages would at first sight appear wholly on the side of the loose horses; the mounted ones, however, compensated for the weight they carry by the intelligence that guides them, succeed at last in turning the troop into the right direction, along which rush pursuers and pursued, with cracking of the stock whips and tearing up of the ground as if men and horses were alike demented, the bells worn by many of the loose animals increasing the confusion of sounds. We once had a horse for whom a cavalcade of this description possessed as irresistible an attraction as the tinkling herd had for our cow, so that the accidental passing of a party of horse hunters, outside the field in which he was grazing, was sure to make him attempt to follow, and we were therefore compelled to hobble him whenever he was turned out, in spite of which impediment he got about so nimbly, by a series of jumps, that Binnahan often called me to look at "horse galloping in jail things." It then occurred to my husband that the universal trick of buck-jumping that prevails amongst Australian horses might be traced to the no less general practice of hobbling them. An animal that is hobbled can move from one spot to another only by an action that resembles the earlier processes of buck-jumping, and the frequent necessity for thus artificially crippling the creature renders the action so habitual that at last it becomes hereditary.

A horse that we purchased had the strange history (with which, however, we were not acquainted until after buying him) of having escaped into the bush with a side-saddle on his back, and of having remained there running wild for a year, when he was again caught, but in an unsaddled condition. How or by what means the horse had managed to rid himself of the encumbrance remains of course a mystery, but the recollection of it haunted him to the extent of making him dangerous to his rider, as, whenever anything alarmed him, he seemed to think that the old saddle was still upon his back, and that its removal required frantic exertions.

The young people of Western Australia naturally find their chief amusement in their horses, as without them they would have no means of getting about from place to place, or of enjoying any intercourse with their friends and neighbours. A girl, therefore, looks upon a side-saddle of her own as a possession much to be coveted, and one that she will take not a little trouble to obtain. I heard of some young ladies who, with this object in view, most industriously set to work picking gum until they had collected enough to exchange with a storekeeper for the much-desired prize. To make this intelligible, I must explain that this gum which flows from the wattle-trees is almost identical with gum-arabic, and is used in Manchester for the same purposes, chiefly stiffening calicos, so that at times there is a considerable demand for it, the storekeepers giving at such periods threepence a pound in ready-money for as much as can be brought to them. It is also used as a sort of sweetmeat or lollipop, whence the *soubriquet* "gum-suckers," as applied

to the young colonists, owing to their habit of never passing a wattle-tree without putting a piece into their mouth.

I think it is Washington Irving who conceives butchers' boys to be the only existing type of the once famous knights-errant; a reflection forced upon him from the flying pace with which the young apprentices, meat-basket on arm, dash along the roads; but had he only extended his travels to Western Australia, he would certainly not have thought the order of headlong riders so near extinction as he had supposed. All home ideas about saving a horse's feet are set at defiance, a hand gallop on the hard road being the approved rate of speed; and the excitement of the pace seems to constitute the sole enjoyment of riding, for of any pleasure to be derived from scenery the colonists appeared to me to have little idea, which I attributed in part to the habit they have naturally acquired of regarding the bush as something to be cleared away and got rid of. It would, perhaps, be more difficult to account for the almost total exemption of their horses from spavin. We did, however, find in one young settler an exception to the *nil admirari* school, and the pleasure of a ride which we once took with him was not a little enhanced by the rarity of meeting a third person to whom we might express our pleasure when we saw anything beautiful with the certainty of receiving a sympathizing answer. This ride was taken shortly before the season for sheepwashing, in October, when the bush was green with grass, and water was lying in the still deep pools in the rocky beds of the gullies. There was no path, nor could my unpractised eyes discover any dis-

tinguishing features to point out our road as he led us mile after mile, winding in and out through the interminable trees. We arrived at length, I remember, upon a large flat expanse of granite even with the ground, where there was a round hole in the rock, as perfectly smooth and circular as if made by art, and full of water, around which some cattle had gathered; but not a human creature did we meet till near home in the evening, when we passed and spoke to a merry-looking little old native who was coming along upon a pony to bring rations to the shepherd.

I have not forgotten the dinner which we had on our return, for it was an experimental one on a bush animal called a *dolghite*, which Rosa had consented to dress according to the directions in a cookery-book for serving up a roasted rabbit. Not that Rosa had any objections to *dolghites* in particular, though I do not think that she had ever eaten one, still less had she ever tasted a rabbit; but for all bush meat that was not kangaroo she had a general feeling something between a contempt and a prejudice, for which she never gave any other reason than that "it smelt wild." The *dolghite* proved, as we had expected, so exceedingly like a rabbit when cooked that we could detect no difference in taste, although we were in the secret; in fact, if the *dolghite* is cut up as for a fricassee the slight difference in the shape of the two animals is unperceived, and the flesh of both being white the deception is complete. The parallel, however, does not extend to their dispositions, for the confidence of a *dolghite* is so difficult to obtain that my husband piqued himself not a little in persuading one, that was given him as a pet, to be on terms of even distant civility with us;

and when we had so far gained his trust as that he would eat bread and milk whilst we were looking at him we felt quite triumphant. His fur was rather long and extremely soft and silky, of a very pretty grey colour, and his tail somewhat shorter than a cat's. It is a fur which is very effective when bordered or lined with rose colour, but if exposed to much wear it soon becomes shabby. The strangest-looking part of him was his hind legs, which very much resembled those of a fowl, and made him appear as if he was an intermediate cousin of both birds and beasts. He came of a family that is given to burrowing, and my husband gave him, as he thought, an unexceptionable home in the bottom of our dining-room cupboard; but our ungrateful pet might have contained the very soul of Baron Trenck himself, to judge from the way in which he at once set to work to mine through the wall into our bed-room. I forget where we secured him afterwards, but the ruling spirit would not be repressed; he had a passion for sapping and mining, which he practised to such an extent that we might be thankful he did not bring the house down. Just as we had succeeded in making him devoid of all anxiety in our company, and quite content in the evening to join the family circle together with the other members of our *ménagerie*, it so happened that he found the house door open, and strolling out, was perhaps seized with a fit of home sickness, for we never saw him afterwards. Our attention having been occupied at the time with affairs of importance we did not at first miss him, and the disappointment that we felt at our loss, when we discovered it, was greater than we might have experienced for a more engaging creature, on

account of the difficulties which we had met and overcome in conquering his natural timidity.

I must now return to the subject of the bush, from which the *dolghite* and his subterrene tastes have led me. The colour of the leaves in the Australian forest is of a browner and more sombre-looking green than is seen in the foliage of our deciduous trees at home, and this circumstance, combined with that of the trees being evergreens, causes most English persons to pine once a year for that freshness of spring-time to which they were accustomed in their own land, and to regret that in the southern hemisphere it is represented only by the first shooting of the cornfields and the early leaves of a few fruit trees foreign to the soil. I cannot say, however, that I ever felt any blank of this kind for which the abundance of the flowers did not, to my mind, make ample compensation. Nevertheless, so much poetical thought has been inspired by the four seasons, that I have sometimes wondered whether a country possessing only half as many could ever prove prolific in poets. From this want of change in the face of nature, this constant sameness of the foliage of the trees, the young people of Australia are at a disadvantage when compared with those of England; since much which is written by the poets and illustrated by the painters of the old country can touch no answering chord in their remembrances of the world around them; while nature, as she has appeared to their own eyes, has as yet found neither painter nor poet to interpret her.

Tennyson's description of a copse bursting into bud, or a picture of Copley Fielding's representing a landscape under a haze, would neither of them carry its full meaning

to one who had been reared amongst evergreen trees, and in the clear atmosphere of Australia. It is to this elasticity and purity of the air that the climate of Swan River owes its healthfulness and its charm—no matter how hot the sun has been, nor, how wearisome its fierce beams have made the labours of the day, it has no sooner sunk below the horizon than the spirits at once revive, and a fresh buoyant feeling replaces all sensation of languor; in the words of Marcellus, though in a different sense to that in which he spoke them, "the nights are wholesome," many persons making a practice of sleeping in their verandahs during the summer months, while teamsters habitually pass the night out of doors with impunity all the year round.

Whatever might be the deficiencies of the colony we could at least say of it as the Roman girl said of her country, "Thou hast thy skies!" No words will better convey the idea of the excessive beauty of the sunset clouds and the great variety of tints than those of Binnahan, who said, as she stood beside me one evening watching the west, "My cousin and me used to choose our frocks out of the sky." Poor little things! the "baseless fabric" on which they exercised their taste was perhaps not more unsubstantial than the clothing on them at the time. Often on summer nights we used to spread out an opossum rug in the garden, and sitting upon it watch the stars, the clear air giving them a size and brilliancy which Michael Lambourne, in 'Kenilworth' did not exaggerate when he said that our "northern blinkers are but farthing candles" compared with those that sparkle in the south.

I believe that most persons on first seeing the Southern Cross feel a degree of disappointment, arising probably from the name having led them to expect to see a constellation completely cruciform, instead of four stars, not quite of the same magnitude, representing only the extreme points of the cross; another reason also may be the low position in the horizon in which, as a ship nears the equator, the cross first rises into view. The constellation vindicates its name when vertical, and grows the more upon the mind, like other beautiful things, the oftener it is gazed upon. Without its "pointers," however, as the two splendid stars are called that accompany it, the Cross would lose much of its attraction; one of these stars can be perceived, even by the naked eye, to change colour, reminding one in so doing of a revolving light at sea.

The "star shower" which was so eagerly watched in England on the night of the thirteenth of November, 1866, was invisible in our latitude, but the pleasure that we took in a summer night's stroll was constantly enhanced by the sight of bright meteors crossing the sky. Our thunder-storms were not many, and those by which the colony is visited chiefly hang upon the sea-coast, in proof of which I need only say that whereas at Fremantle the lightning conductors were in the proportion of one to each house, there were much fewer at Perth, whilst in our neighbourhood, at sixty miles distance from the sea, there was but one dwelling so provided. During five years I only remember the occurrence of two storms that could be called serious, in one of which a chimney on our house was slightly struck. None of us were injured,

though at the moment that I heard the plaster fall from the chimney I felt a sudden sharp prick as if the end of a red-hot wire had entered the back of my neck; an instant afterwards my husband ran into the room from the verandah where he had been watching the storm, to see if I was killed, having himself experienced a similar sensation to mine in one of his temples, but with greater force, as the shock had seemed to pass downwards through his whole body to the ground. We ran into the kitchen to see if the servants were hurt, and finding Rosa and Binnahan quite safe though much frightened my husband begged us all to kneel down whilst he returned thanks for our safety. This was on Advent Sunday, and we had but just returned from church, where the rolling of the thunder and plashing of the rain upon the wooden shingles of the roof had rendered much of the service inaudible. The clap following the flash which struck the chimney did not appear to me so tremendous as others that I had heard, and my husband said that he perceived no sound at all. Possibly we were both more or less stunned, for some of our neighbours said that they had never in their lives known such a peal of thunder. A policeman's wife standing at a window had her cheek blistered by the lightning, and the warder of the convict depôt received a shock of electricity, such as we had experienced, in his hand whilst in the act of raising it to tilt an accumulation of water off a canvas awning. Bishop Salvado mentions that the natives usually take refuge from thunder-storms beneath twisted trees, "*alberi tortuosi*," and adds that he had never known a tree of this kind to be struck with lightning. I suppose that the sort

of tree to which he alludes is one that is commonly called the fluted gum, with a stem resembling a twisted Elizabethan pillar.

Whirlwinds we were well accustomed to, and the sound of one of them coming up was a signal for shutting all doors and windows immediately, to prevent the ruthless scattering of our papers and letters over the garden, though the untidy effect thus produced was generally the extent of the damage. On one occasion, however, a large piece of the thatch was whirled off our house by the sudden action of the air, which had been perfectly tranquil a few minutes previously. There is something very grand in the roaring of the wind amongst the forest trees that precedes the approach of a really heavy storm.

The great point of superiority enjoyed by the colony of Western Australia over its neighbours on the eastern shores of the continent is its complete freedom from the scourge of dust-storms and hot winds, and perhaps to this immunity may be partly owing the extraordinary suitability of the climate of Swan River to weak lungs. We not only met several persons who told us that in this colony they enjoyed a relief from affections of the chest to which in England they had been always victims, but we were also intimately acquainted with two cases of real pulmonary disease, which when we first visited the patients we expected to terminate fatally in a few weeks or even days, and yet the progress of the complaint was arrested by the warm weather, and both the sufferers recovered to an extent that admitted of their fulfilling the ordinary duties of life. Unfortunately I kept no daily register of the thermometer, and can therefore only

point to the effect of the climate upon certain states of health or disease in proof of its virtues.

The fearlessness with which people can remain out of doors at night and can continue their day's labour in spite of the sun, are the two points which most excite the wonder of a stranger. Khourabeṇe's "old master" told me that he once drove his team for many miles upon a day that the sun-heat stood at 145° Fahrenheit. "I started," he said, "in the morning with four bay horses, but as the day went on, they became so covered with foam that I seemed to be driving white ones." On the other hand Binnahan in using the expression "glass frost," showed plainly that she knew ice by sight, and early risers in the winter would find the puddles frozen, though in the course of five years we never knew more than one occasion when the ground continued hard in shady places throughout the day. That one exception occurred during the extremely dry winter of 1865, when the frosts were more severe than had been known for fifteen or twenty years, and an old colonist, who perhaps forgot that her increasing age made her more susceptible of cold, informed me in an oracular manner that "the seasons were changing," and that she "should not be surprised if we was to have a fall of snow." But, unfortunately for her reputation as a weather-wise woman, no snowstorm came to give her the satisfaction of saying that she had expected it.

Perhaps I may be allowed, though at the risk of some repetition, to close my own description of the West Australian climate with that of Bishop Salvado, than whom no one, not excepting even the aborigines, is better

qualified to pronounce an opinion upon it. "The climate of Swan River," says he, "is not only healthier than that of any other Australian colony, but may be pronounced also to be one of the very best in the whole world. The heat of summer, though it sometimes reaches 34° of Reaumur, is not stifling, and people can work out of doors without dread of injury, though exposed to the full force of the sun. Those hot winds that cause so much annoyance in the other Australian colonies are unknown here, and we inhale the fresh sea-breeze from eleven o'clock in the forenoon until sundown. The atmosphere of the winter's day is temperate and delightful after the rising of the sun, but the thermometer sinks to four degrees above zero at three or four o'clock in the morning. Frosts are frequent although snow is unknown. The summer nights are refreshed by heavy dews, and sometimes by rain in January" (this last occurred only once in our observation during five years) "which in that hot season is of the greatest benefit. Sleeping in the open air in the midst of the forests, on fine nights, is unhealthy neither in summer nor winter, least of all with the accompaniment of a good fire. The prevalent disorders are not fatal, and those which occur most frequently are dysentery and ophthalmia."

CHAPTER IX.

Natural history often considered a dry study — People of this opinion had better skip Chapters IX. and X. — Garrison of cats — How it is disposed of — Cats as playthings — Cat brings in yellow lizard and green snake — Bob-tailed Guana — Scarcity of scorpions and abundance of lizards — Ubiquity of bronze lizard — "Mountain Devil" — Similarity to granite lichens — Timothy missing — Brought back by smiling boy — Dies, and obliged to be buried for want of arsenical soap — Untameable *Noombat* — Supposed pig in cabbages — Impossible to identify, satisfactorily, creature called *Bunny-ar* — Tradition of alligator — Black snake — Binnahan's escape — "Bunch of black-puddings" — Palmer-worms — Trap-door spiders — Walking-stick insects — Present of kangaroo — Kangaroo's mode of self-defence — Dangerous guest at meal-times — Jacky drinks sugar-beer — Little old native brings dog — The chase — New propensity — Jacky succumbs to privation from beer — Kangaroo hops away with baby — Modes of dressing flesh of kangaroo — Fur counterpanes — Kangaroo rats and "boodies" — Dog fails to make distinctions — A domestic tyrant — Emu's feathers — Opossum — Bishop Salvado's opinion to be taken with reservation — Opossum's noiseless mode of walking — Supernumerary claw — Various hiding-places tried by Possie; finally selects carpet-bag — Fondness for flowers — I am obliged to admit that Possie eats birds — Possie plays truant — Returns to supper — Opossum's mode of eating apricots — Possie and her daughter — Domestic duties — Fondness for society — Possie supposed to have rejoined her relations — Tender retrospections.

When Goldsmith began to write his 'History of Animated Nature,' Johnson foretold of the work that it would prove "as interesting as a Persian tale," but the same great authority has also said, in the epitaph written for his tomb, that Goldsmith had the magic art of "adorning every subject that he touched." In the absence of such gifted hands wherewith to array natural history, there are many persons to whom its study offers small attraction,

and I would warn such readers, who may have followed me thus far, that they had better skip the present chapter and the next also, both of which will contain little more than a descriptive list of a few of those birds, beasts, reptiles, and insects which flourished in our Australian house and garden, or which came under our immediate notice in our short excursions in the neighbourhood.

To begin therefore—on our arrival at the parsonage we found no less than six cats already in possession. It is true that the garrison wore a look of great starvation, but when we considered that possession was nine points of the law, and that each cat was proprietor of an equal number of lives, and that all seemed determined to hold the premises against us to the last gasp, we thought that the odds were heavy against us, the new-comers. The cats followed up their advantages with great spirit, carrying our provisions by assault, and baffling us by their superior local information, which enabled them to effect an entrance, all six together, in the middle of the night, through two unglazed panes of a bed-room window which had escaped our notice.

The ringleader, whose many scars and almost total loss of ears seemed to betoken the champion of his clan, met an honourable death from the gun, and a native named Nyiddel happening to call upon us just then with one of his wives, we encouraged him to capture the cat which was second in command, and to carry it away as his prey, natives esteeming cats as good eating, though shy of saying so for fear of being laughed at by the "white fellows."

One we kept as a favourite, and the fortunes of the other three I forget; but my carelessness as to their fate

is a proof of the alteration that a few years can effect in the value of property, for cats in the first settling of the colony were worth ten shillings each, and not to be lightly parted with. Kittens, however, appeared to be allowed to spring up in unlimited numbers in the lone houses in the bush, owing perhaps to the scarcity of any other sort of children's playthings in such localities; and I remember seeing a little only daughter in a solitary home in the forest, who in respect of mates was as badly off as Wordsworth's "Lucy Fell" on her "wide moor," amusing herself with three generations of cats for her sole toys, the numerical strength of the party amounting to eight.

The privileged pussy that we retained brought to us a few days afterwards, as if pleased to show us a natural curiosity, a bright yellow lizard beautifully marked with small patches of black, and to the best of my recollection, twenty-two inches in length. We never saw another exactly like it, though I afterwards espied one in the bush that seemed of a similar length and shape, but of a dull drab colour like that of the decayed leaves over which it was running.

The snout of both creatures was long and slender, presenting a striking contrast to that of the lizard which the colonists call the "bob-tailed" guana, or in colonial pronunciation "gew-anna," whose head and snout form an obtuse oval, whilst the tail looks as if amputated by some accident, giving the animal a most singular and quaint appearance. These bob-tailed lizards are covered with large armour-like scales, so much the colour of ironstone gravel as readily to escape observation; indeed the only one that I am aware of having seen, excepting in a

stuffed condition, was trodden upon by my husband's horse, which had set its foot upon the head of the poor animal evidently without having distinguished it from the pebbles of the road.

In an excursion that we once made, towards the end of the rainy season, we were fortunate enough to come upon two specimens together of a lizard of exactly the same shape as that of the "bob-tails," but of much brighter colours, sunning themselves in a sandy spot where they barely left us room to pass without driving over one of them. These must have been fully a foot long, with large heads and stumpy tails, their backs broad and of a bright green, the whole under-part of the body being a sort of rose colour. In fact they had a great variety of tint, for on my husband jumping down and clasping one of the pair round the middle to give a good look at it, the offended party opened a mouth like a blue cavern. Our little native Binnahan told me that such a lizard had once bitten her mother through the thumb-nail, but my husband's examination of the mouth made him doubt the fact, since he could discover no teeth whatever.

The next curiosity which the cat brought me was of a less innocent description. I found her on her hind legs one morning in a kind of waltz with something that she held up in her fore paws, and, as at first I mistook her plaything for a branch of pale green brier, I was not a little startled when I found it to be a snake which she had just killed. This was the only snake I ever saw in our house, in fact there were so many lizards about us that we always felt easy on the score of snakes, as the two will not live in company.

The snake is a deadly enemy of the lizard, and though I did not particularly like to find even the pretty little bronze lizard amongst my clean clothes, nor hidden away in boxes through which I was accidentally searching, nor on my hair, nor holding tight with its delicate fingers on the nap of a coat, nor sticking upon the opposite wall to confront our eyes on first opening them in the morning; in each and all of which places I have found or seen the lizards, yet, knowing that they and we had one grand common antipathy, I made the best of their undesired familiarity. It may be, also, that in selecting a residence the lizard takes care to avoid such as are frequented by scorpions; at all events during five years a solitary specimen that we killed upon our sofa was the only scorpion that we ever saw.

But if even a bronze lizard could look uncanny when it came upon me unexpectedly, what can be said of its cousin the "Mountain Devil," whose name science has by no means softened, as ugly creatures have a right to expect, but has actually gone out of her way to make worse, changing its common appellation to "Moloch horridus!" This ill-used creature possesses, both in the position of the thumbs on its fore paws and also in changing its colours when out of health, somewhat of the character of a true cameleon; and now that I speak of character it is right to add that, excepting in its appearance, the bad name it has received is wholly undeserved, for it is a meek inoffensive little lizard; and has the one grace of the toad, a pair of pretty eyes, with a further resemblance to that last-named reptile in the wide shape of its stomach.

The "Mountain Devil" is about five or six inches long, often not quite so much, and its head, back, legs, and tail, in fact the whole of its body, are covered with prickly spines like the thorns of a rose bush. It looks very much as if it had two heads, or rather perhaps like a lady with a large chignon; and to make this resemblance the more perfect the false head, which is placed behind the real one, is much the biggest of the two; seeming (so my husband thought) to have been intended as a defence to the head proper: since he found that when the creature was alarmed by bringing a stick or a rod close to its eyes it instinctively placed its real head between its fore legs, and brought the false one down to the former position of the real one; thus retroverting the formidable spines with which both are armed, and presenting an object which its great enemy the snake could scarcely attempt to swallow.

The colour of the creature is a rich yellow varied with spots of deep vandyke-brown; these are large upon the head and body, and diminish gradually as they approach the tail until they become no larger than pepper corns. The spots seem intended to imitate the lichens upon the red granite rocks amongst which the lizard lives and seeks its prey, chiefly ants and flies; and the resemblance is much increased by the fact that at different seasons of the year the brown patches change into green and reddish hues, in accordance with the varying age and appearance of the lichens, so that the insects upon which the lizard feeds are completely deceived, and lulled into a false security which proves fatal to them.

I forget how we became possessed of it, but at all events

a "Mountain Devil" heads the list of all our Australian pets. His tail (for a domestic animal acquires a personality that rises above the neuter gender) being so rough with thorns afforded a capital holding-place for the string by which we tethered him in the garden, choosing a sandy spot where he could find plenty of ants for food; but we soon found that we must protect him by a wire dish-cover, as the cat was remarkably fond of sitting near him and examining him, and we thought that her curiosity was not altogether of a disinterested sort. I confess that I always avoided any care of him that involved personal contact, though so well convinced of his harmlessness, and when evening came and our pet had to be untethered and put to sleep in a basket lined with wool, like a child in its cot, it was my husband and not myself who carried him to his bed.

It did not seem right to have a pet without a name, or, what was as bad, with a name unfit for daily use owing to its diabolical character; so my husband pitched upon "Timothy" as an improvement; not that we ever expected him to come at call, but to satisfy our feeling of what was due to a creature now established as one of the family circle. I must own that the undemonstrative tone of Timothy's disposition was a hindrance to intimacy on my part, especially as I did not share in my husband's desire to learn as much as possible about the animal's habits. He would lie placidly on the palm of a familiar hand, showing no wish to get away; he would stand upon the table most obligingly whilst coloured sketches were taken of him; but nothing ever seemed to make him especially glad or sorry, and we could not determine whether his

tranquillity resulted from contentment with his circumstances or resignation to fate.

My husband, however, acquired a strange regard for his pet, and one afternoon as I was returning from a walk he met me with a face so melancholy that I saw immediately that something had gone wrong. "Timothy is lost," he said. It appeared that he had fallen asleep on the sofa with Timothy lying beside him in his open basket, and when he woke up the cradle was empty. We felt sure that the cat knew all about it, but that did not make the matter any better, and, after hunting for him all over the garden with no success, we gave Timothy up as lost for ever. But the next evening a smiling boy walked up to our front door with the question, "Had we lost our Mountain Devil?" and behold, Timothy lay in his hand.

The boy had found him creeping through a fence, taking a direct course for Mount Douraking and his native granite; and as, when recaptured, he was blind of one eye, we felt more than ever confirmed in our suspicions that the cat was responsible for his abduction from his basket, and that she had dropped him on finding that his thorns made him an awkward mouthful.

We again gave him his bed of wool, and tethered him once more to feed on the ants in the garden, and I cannot say that the loss of his eye seemed to weigh much on his spirits as he had never appeared to have any; but in a day or two afterwards we noticed that his colours appeared unnatural in hue, and on examining him closely, we found that our poor Timothy was dead. A plain grave in the garden was, we thought, below the merits of one who

might have claimed a niche in a chamber of scientific horrors, and we should at least have liked to have given him the honours of a glass case; but we could not do so for want of arsenical soap to preserve his skin, and we therefore buried Timothy just as he was.

In our next pet we advanced a few steps in the order of creation, for we tried to tame a *Noombat,* or "banded Myrmicobius," which a native had brought us as a present; it was a little quadruped of the ant-eater species, about the size of a small cat, the fur marked in rings round the body in colours of brown and buff. But being unfortunately full grown he did not care, as a younger *Noombat* might have done, for making fresh acquaintances, was suspicious of bread and milk—in fact would eat nothing that we offered him, and every now and then made a noise which, without exaggeration, was very like the roaring of a bull. Altogether he was a disappointment, and when he died, after a few days spent in the attempt to tame him, we were only saved from feelings of remorse by the recollection that we had never asked the native to bring him.

But this is a digression for which I must ask pardon as there yet remains another saurian to be mentioned. Between forty and fifty miles in a south-easterly direction from our residence some young ladies of our acquaintance saw one morning what they imagined to be a pig amongst the cabbages in their father's garden. The dogs were immediately called to drive out the intruder, which, instead of taking to its heels as was expected, faced round ferociously, and disclosed in so doing the limbs and lineaments of no pig but of an enormous lizard-shaped creature

above five feet long, and apparently much disposed to resent all interference.

The screams of the frightened ladies brought out a brother armed with his gun, who immediately shot the lizard, and, with exultation more natural than scientific, chopped off its head and laid the carcass across the threshold of the house to astonish those whom the dinner-hour should bring in from the field. On hearing this story from one of the actors in it, a few years after the occurrence, the point on which we felt most curiosity was to discover whether the head of the reptile had terminated in a sharp snout like the crocodile, or in a blunt rounded form like the iguana: but the head having been unfortunately thrown away at the time of the decapitation, and an attempt to preserve the skin having proved ineffectual for want of proper means and appliances, we lost all opportunity of deciding upon the animal's true character.

That it lived "to the eastward," that the natives called it by the name of *Bunny-ar*,* and said that it was "sulky fellow" and that they would climb trees to avoid it, were the only distinct answers that we ever obtained to our inquiries amongst them upon the subject. Khourabene seemed to retain a clear recollection of having, when quite a child, seen his father engaged in fighting with such a creature: but his notions as to the exact shape and appearance were too misty to be depended upon, and though he drew a rough outline of it upon the ground at

* Perhaps the name of *Bunny-ar* would afford some clue to the nature of the mysterious creature called *Bunny-ip* by the natives of New South Wales, the existence of which is supposed by many persons to be merely chimerical.

my husband's request, which had the sharp crocodile head, we did not consider ourselves justified in coming to any definite opinion upon the question from such vague reminiscences. That it exists at the present day in the wild country to the eastward seems to be certain, as traces which proved its presence were seen by one of the latest exploring parties; but that it was very rarely to be met with we were convinced by the fact of our never procuring a specimen, though my husband offered a reward of five pounds to any person who would bring him an unmutilated skin and head. The existence, however, of so large a lizard in the district sufficiently accounted to us for the prevalence of a tradition, to which we otherwise attached no importance, of "an alligator" having once been seen in the dry sandy bed of the river at Barladong.

The reptile most dreaded where we lived was the black snake, which attains at its full growth a length of rather more than five feet, and whose bite is certain death within a few hours, if the wounded part cannot be immediately cut out. As this creature mostly haunted swampy places it was wise to be cautious in approaching any well at dusk, lest a snake should already be there, like an evil genius, to dispute possession of the water.

We learned from the sad experience of one of our neighbours to be doubly careful when approaching any water in close proximity to vines or fig-trees when the fruit was ripe. The landlord of the inn whose dogs gave me such a noisy reception on my journey to Barladong, had a spring of this secluded kind in his garden; and here, as he stood unsuspiciously one evening speculating upon his crop of grapes, two white fangs were darted at his thumb. In

the dim light he mistook them for the horns of a grasshopper, but the thrill of pain which instantly afterwards ran through his whole body dispelled the momentary illusion. There was no time for trifling, so, having first tied a piece of string tightly above the bite, he manfully cut away the flesh around with his razor, and then rode alone twenty miles to seek the aid of the nearest surgeon, no doubt thus saving his life by his own courage and presence of mind.

A spot which a snake has once frequented may always be expected to be visited by others of the fraternity; and the only live black snake which I ever saw was also at this same inn where the landlord had been bitten. We had gone there for two days' change of air and for the pleasure of wandering in the bush, and had taken Binnahan with us, who was of course in the highest spirits—playing with the many cats of the establishment—making believe to help our landlady in washing tumblers and teacups—and, every quarter of an hour at least, breaking off from all pretence of work in order to bring us offerings of ripe figs from a tree in the vineyard and to take toll of the fruit for herself. Suddenly she came flying into our little parlour, with her eyes half a size larger than usual, and panted out the words, "Master! black snake in fig-tree!" We speedily repaired to the yard and found a little knot of people eagerly gazing at a respectful distance into the said tree, upon a branch of which lay stretched the object of general attention, flattening its body to secure a good hold, and eating the fruit that grew on the farthermost twig with a composure that offered a strong contrast to our excitement.

As we stood looking at the dangerous creature our chief feeling was that of wonder that Binnahan had not been bitten, for she had been a dozen times in and out of the tree that morning. A large pile of firewood, however, was stacked near the fig-tree, and the supposition that the snake had but lately glided out of it to look for its breakfast appeared the most probable solution of the poor child's merciful escape. I did not exactly see how the enemy was to be persuaded to "come and be killed" without endangering the bystanders, but the ostler soon settled that point by a blow from a long pole, knocking from the tree both branch and snake together; and the mistress of the house, remembering her brother's narrow escape, would depute to none the office of executioner, but revenged all family injuries past and present by herself beheading the outlaw as soon as it reached the ground.

A hair-breadth escape was related to me by a poor neighbour who, in putting her hand to the bottom of a basket in the dark, touched "something that felt like a bunch of black-puddings," which proved to be a sleeping snake. On another occasion the same woman observed the head of a black snake wriggling its way into her wooden hut through a knot hole in one of the boards. She rushed out and killed it at once, thus saving her baby, whose cradle was close to the aperture, so that the snake would most probably have curled itself up by the sleeping infant, for the sake of the warmth, had not the mother providentially noticed its attempted entrance.

I used sometimes to fancy that I had found the track of a snake upon the sandy path that led to our house, but my thinking so only proved my ignorance of the impres-

sion which a snake's movements would leave behind him, for what I had noticed were in reality the traces of a march of Palmer-worms, of which we now and then saw a prodigious number.

On one especial occasion we descried laid across the road at a little distance, what we supposed to be a string of twisted opossum fur, such as is made by the natives; but on nearer approach we found it to be a party of these same Palmers on a pilgrimage, the head of one touching the tail of another, and all of them dressed as for penance in the hair-cloth which has been given them by nature.

In a clayey bank in our field a good many of the curious trap-door spiders had taken up their abode. These singular insects form a circular tube in the ground, which is lined with smooth hangings of silk, and closed at the top by a tightly-fitting door, furnished with a spring hinge which is also lined on the inside with silk. The upper surface of this trap-door is made of pellets of earth so fashioned and arranged as exactly to match the surface of the ground into which the shaft is sunk, even to the extent of being covered with shreds of moss should the bank be a mossy one.

One scarcely knows which to admire most, the skilful rounding of the shaft, the perfectly adjusted hinge to the door, or the talent for concealment which renders this spider's dwelling so difficult to discover. Although constructed on the surface of the bare ground the trap-door is so well masked that, if Binnahan had not shown us the exact spot where it might be found, we should probably have never been aware that we had these interesting

insects for our neighbours. To elude her quick senses, however, or indeed those of any native, a coat of darkness alone could have sufficed, and not even that unless its wearer left no impression of his footsteps.

The manner in which Nature teaches all her creatures to provide for their own concealment and safety, is a most interesting study to any observant person; while in some cases she herself has rendered such instincts unnecessary by so framing the outside appearance of her *protégés* as to be of itself an all-sufficient disguise, as in the rose-caterpillar in England which the most quick-sighted observer can scarcely distinguish from the short stumps of the bush on which it feeds. But in some foreign countries, Australia amongst others, Nature seems fairly to frolic and revel in imitation, and to keep as loose a rein upon her fancy as the writer of a fairy tale. Thus to meet with a dead leaf quietly walking across a footpath, or a piece of dead stick sauntering along on its own account, reminds one of the travelling pin and needle whom the cock and hen overtook upon their journey as related by Grimm.

I never, to my knowledge, saw more than one "walking-stick insect," but the race was not uncommon around Barladong, and the creature's resemblance to a twig is so exact that one might easily pass it unnoticed, even if beneath one's very eyes. A friend brought me a specimen to look at, and set it down in our verandah, where its movements, corresponding with its appearance, were those of a little broken branch gently fluttered over the ground by the wind.

Walking-stick insects (*Bacteria trophinus*) are not ex-

clusively confined to Australia, but if Mr. Woods* is correct in saying that they are only found in the hottest parts of the earth, his assertion confirms our experience of the extreme heat of a Western Australian summer in latitude 32° south.

I cannot dismiss this subject without relating an anecdote not quite irrelevant to the familiar name of these animated twigs. We had been sitting one evening at twilight in the verandah of a lady whose caution with regard to reptiles verged somewhat on excess. We had wished her good night and returned towards our own home when, shortly after our departure, she became aware that a snake was hanging by its under jaw upon the outer ledge of her casement, and curiously peering through the window into the room where she sat. With a steady voice, and her eyes fixed upon the foe, she called her maid and bade her run to the nearest cottage to request the first man that could be found to lose no time in coming to kill the snake, over which she herself would undertake to keep watch.

The maid, well pleased to get out of harm's way, flew off on her errand, leaving her mistress to mesmerize the serpent by the fixity of her gaze; which she did with such effect that, beyond a slight pendulous movement, it never so much as winked or stirred during her solitary vigil. At length the girl returned, accompanied by our own day-labourer, and a consultation as to the best method of destroying the venomous beast was held. As it was evident that the snake could not be done to death in the

* 'Illustrated Natural History,' vol. iii., p. 485. Rev. J. G. Woods. Routledge, &c.

dark a kitchen candle was quickly brought upon the scene of action, when, as if by the stroke of enchantment, the reptile vanished, or rather was changed into a walking-stick carved to imitate a dog's head, with two white beads for eyes, which the intended dragon-slayer instantly recognized as the property of his master.

The demise of the *Noombat* had left a vacancy in our *ménagerie* which, thanks to the unsolicited interposition of our neighbours, was of no long duration. Possibly we had gained the reputation of people to whom no sort of pets could come amiss.

We had heard the name of Lennard in the colony, but had never seen its owner; nevertheless one morning a boy appeared at our door, hugging in his arms a bag very full of something, and with the words, "Mr. Lennard's compliments, and he has sent you a kangaroo," the boy put his bag on the ground and let out its contents.

"Jacky," as we named the gift of our unknown benefactor, must have been at that time from four to five months old, and was as tame as are all marsupial animals that have been caught and petted when quite young. If, for instance, anyone walking through the bush happens to pick up a young kangaroo rat, and carries it in his pocket for an hour or two, the rat, when set down upon the ground again, will come hopping after the man, or rather perhaps after the coat-pocket which has no doubt brought back to the little creature's mind its reminiscences of the maternal pouch.

Jacky's fore paws were extremely small, even fragile-looking, and when he boxed our cat's ears, as he soon learned to do for any fancied affront, I did not think that

the blow seemed to hurt her. But there is a vast difference between the fore leg of a kangaroo full grown and that of a stripling like Jacky, who could only command a comfortable view of our dinner-table by raising himself on his hind legs and tail. At full growth the fore paws of a kangaroo are quite as large as those of a mastiff, though of another shape, and a tall old *Booma*, as the natives call the male kangaroo, can bring his head on a level with the face of a man on horseback, so as to use his "hands" with effect.

Jacky's hind feet were much like those of a deer, only that the hoof was far more pointed, and young as he was, one could imagine that they had the power to inflict terrible blows. A kangaroo's feet are, in fact, his weapons of defence with which, when he is brought to bay, he tears his antagonists the dogs most dreadfully, and instances are not wanting of even men having been killed by a large old male. No doubt this peculiar method of disposing of his enemies has earned for him the name of *Booma*, which in the native language signifies to strike.

Jacky was of a very sociable turn, and fond of following us from room to room, in doing which his hind feet sounded on the boarded floors as if somebody in thick boots was hopping about on one leg. In the garden he would lie well stretched out, looking the oddest compound of a long-legged bird joined on to something that was neither sheep nor deer and yet resembled both; if he sat up and looked about him his attitude was suggestive of a tripod, for in taking a range of the horizon he rested upon his tail as on a third leg. At meal-times he was a particularly dangerous guest, as he had a way of laying his nose upon the edge of the table and then turning his head from side to

side in an inquiring fashion, as if anxious to make his choice amongst the dishes. Consequently when I afterwards heard of his having "broken all the cups and saucers" at his last place, I thought that the statement bore probability on the face of it, and that the fact of his having done so might have suggested to his former owner the idea that a change of masters would be gratifying to all parties.

New society sometimes develops new faculties, and Jacky now showed a strong propensity to experiments upon the properties of sugar-beer. We had a cask with a leaky tap standing in one of the verandahs, beneath which a saucer was always placed to catch the overflow; Jacky one day thought fit to taste its contents, and found them so much to his mind that he quickly repeated his visit. By degrees he acquired sufficient boldness to empty the saucer at one bout, after which, with a nice calculation not to have been expected from his sheep-like cranium, he would lie down to sleep away the time that must elapse before it could again be filled by the leakage, at which period he would wake up and return to the barrel for another draught, always choosing some shady spot in the vineyard in which to sleep off the effects of the potations. I cannot say that I saw any particular harm in all this, but my husband often remonstrated with me on keeping a tipsy kangaroo.

We had taken care on Jacky's account to warn the natives against bringing their dogs with them when visiting the parsonage, but one day we saw a large kangaroo dog coming towards the house with a queer little old native who, from having lost his heels in a fire, and being

in consequence obliged to walk on tiptoes, was commonly called Jingy—I suppose because the tracks that he left were like nothing human, just as the prints of bullocks and of men wearing boots were pronounced by the natives, when seen for the first time, to be "Jingy," *i.e.* "devil," tracks. No sooner did the dog perceive Jacky than the chace began, and the noise which was made by the lookers-on, in trying to call back the dog, brought us into the garden imagining that nothing less could cause such shouting than the house having taken fire.

Pursued by the dog, Jacky went flying like the wind three times round the outside fence, then made a diversion and took his course up a rising ground; but sugar-beer being bad for training, and Jacky therefore out of condition, the dog gained so much on him here that we held our breath, expecting that a few moments more would end his days miserably. At that instant a girl appeared, who was on her way to fetch water, and carrying two empty buckets on a hoop. She stopped as if in astonishment, waiting for the hunt to come up to her: the kangaroo passed her, the dog only a yard or two behind, when the girl met him, and flinging up her hoop under his jaw, gave poor Jacky time to turn through a little gate and find security in a garden. There he lay crouching until our man, who had done his best to follow in the race, lifted him up in his arms and carried him back in a very winded plight, perfectly knocked up, but able to lap a little beer when he was set down in the kitchen. The poor old native dared not show his face for many a long day after.

But as the winter advanced and the green crops came

on Jacky began to show another inclination which he had not before manifested, one less foreign to his nature it is true than the beer, but even more injurious to his reputation as a harmless domestic kangaroo, one in fact fatal both to our peace and to his own. We were now continually disgraced by the accounts which were brought us of his having spent whole nights in grazing in our neighbours' gardens and cornfields, reports which were sadly strengthened by his often appearing at breakfast with no appetite whatever, and with his coat whitened over with hoar frost; and yet we could not bear to follow the suggestion which was freely offered to us that it would be the best plan to keep him imprisoned in a little yard, with a chain round his waist like a monkey, until the harvest was ripened and got in. We determined instead to send him to some people living in the bush who had no crops to be injured, and who promised that he should be well looked after until he could return to us and the stubble-fields. Poor Jacky never lived to see either again; he pined away when parted from his old friends, and I am afraid that his end was hastened by being deprived of beer, and that he sank a victim to an artificial want.

Eating the neighbours' corn, however, is not the only cause that I have known alleged for dismissing a kangaroo. In a settler's family at the distance of a few miles from Barladong a strange freak was played by a petted kangaroo, as if in emulation of that traditional monkey which, according to one version, carried off Oliver Cromwell from his nurse, and by another account of the legend is stated to have stolen a young Fitzgerald.

The house stood on an eminence above the river, and one day the kangaroo picked up the baby out of its cradle, and, with the child in his arms, went hopping down the bank. His intentions were good, no doubt, for he permitted himself to be overtaken and deprived of his charge, but the poor mother had in the meanwhile received such a fright that the would-be nursemaid was "given warning" on the spot.

At the time of the first settling of the colony English-bred greyhounds were used for hunting the kangaroo and emu, and I have been told that in those days the value of a really good brace of dogs was fifty pounds. Since then cross-breeds between mastiff and greyhound, or better still between fox-hound and Scottish deer-hound, have been introduced, and are known under the name of kangaroo dogs. It was long before sheep were sufficiently plentiful to admit of being freely eaten, and those persons who were so fortunate as to possess good dogs lived as much as possible on kangaroo venison, which still retains an honoured place at all tables even though the sauce of necessity is wanting.

The usual price of the meat whilst in season is twopence-halfpenny the pound, and the hind quarters and tail alone are cooked, the other parts of the animal falling to the share of the dogs. Being very dry meat it requires as much basting as a hare, and is generally eaten with the accompaniment of fat pork. A larded loin of kangaroo is a real dainty, but the larding was our own idea, and I fancied that our larding-needle was unique in the colony. The tail makes a splendid soup which is very nutritious, and also capital stews and pasties; in fact it

is far superior to ox-tail for all culinary purposes. To see two people skinning a kangaroo's tail is like watching the game that children call "French and English"; one cannot help wondering which of the pair will first tumble backwards, so great is the strength with which the skin adheres to the sinews, which are, owing to their toughness, used by the natives in place of thread in the seams of their fur mantles. If kangaroo is dressed like jugged hare the deception is complete, and the plan also answers well of salting a piece of the loin and then hanging it up the chimney to dry in the smoke until it becomes hard enough to be grated like Hamburg beef.

There is a much smaller kind of animal called the rock kangaroo, of which I employed Khourabene to bring me skins enough to make a large hearth-rug. The fur is softer and longer than that of the large kangaroo, and prettier also, but far inferior in durability. Rosa rather deplored my fancy for the Australian furs, since she had seen them so constantly used as coverings for the beds in the poorer sort of colonial houses, that she could not reconcile herself to my adoption of the same custom in our own. She failed, however, to talk me out of my predilections, for the nights were cold in winter, and foot-mats of kangaroo skins, or counterpanes of opossum fur rendered us less sensible of the fact that our house was by no means impervious to wind and weather. A very moderate degree of cold, too, seemed to us severe indeed after the intense heats of summer, and when the rain has been accompanied by cold wind we have found ourselves chilly indoors, even though the thermometer in the verandah might be standing above 60°.

Another animal with which the bush swarms is the kangaroo rat, or, I should perhaps rather say the "boody," though there is but a very slight difference between the two creatures, except that the "boody" is a burrower and makes its habitation underground, while the kangaroo rat usually forms its nest in an old hollow tree. There is also a distinction between them in the colour of the tail.

These rats or "boodies" are of much the same size as their English cousins, and resemble them in the shape of the head and ears, though the body is rather larger than that of the old black rat, being fully as big as that of a well grown Hanoverian. The long hind legs, however, which are quite of the kangaroo type, diminish this resemblance to the rat which is given by the shape of the head and ears, so that I have often thought that "Australian Jerboa" would be the more fitting name for the animal; but the likeness between it and the English rat was strong enough to mislead Binnahan, who, on finding a picture in 'Punch' of rats dressed in coats and trousers, exclaimed, "Look at the *boodies*, missis! they have all got on comfortable clothes."

Should a number of these creatures be established in the vicinity nothing is safe,—flour, sugar, pork, candles, and soap, all seem to suit their tastes, and they burrow with as much ease and rapidity as the rats with which we are familiar at home. A servant once employed by us, who had been a bush sawyer for some years, used to complain bitterly of the trouble that a colony of boodies had caused him before he could succeed in frightening them away from his hut. Bishop Salvado also, in his account of the Benedictine settlement at New Norcia, mentions

the very great annoyance caused by these animals in the earlier days of the Mission, and speaks with gratitude of a poor Irish servant who endeavoured to lessen the nuisance by making him a present of a cat.

A pair of kangaroo rats were brought to me late one evening as a gift, and though I saw my dog looking at them sideways in a manner which was inhospitable to say the least of it, yet, as she had always bestowed similar glances on all the other pets that we had ever possessed, I forgot what her sense of duty in this particular case might be, and carelessly left the rats that night in the kitchen. As might have been expected both were found next morning very neatly shaken to death, the terrier's ideas of strict justice being quite above making scientific distinctions between rats with pouches and rats without. The next rat that was given to me I introduced to the dog with a solemn injunction that the new-comer should be allowed an unmolested existence. But the rat repaid the dog's sufferance by giving himself great airs, behaving as though he was master of the house, and resenting with truculent kicks from his long hind legs the slightest difference of opinion between himself and any one of us. He was fond of hiding himself in the beds and there sleeping through the day, waking up at night exceedingly fresh and lively, and ready to follow us about the garden in a series of hops that resembled the bounding of an india-rubber ball. We ventured out with him one night beyond our fence, he hopping after us, and on returning to the house we found that our tyrant had given us the slip; at all events, we never saw him again. The announcement that he was nowhere visible on the premises seemed

to lift a load off the mind of the dog, who had been living for some time in a state of preternatural self-restraint, and even the whole household owned to a feeling of relief.

The kangaroo is one of the supporters of the arms of Australia, his fellow-helper on the opposite side of the shield being an emu, light-heeled creatures both of them, to which the motto "Advance Australia" seems thoroughly suitable.

The emu is a bird very easily tamed, but we would not enrol one of the race amongst our favourites, on account of the rooted idea prevalent amongst these birds that everything which they can see about a house is an article of provender. Back-combs, tobacco-pipes, two-inch nails, screws, and screw-drivers are swallowed by him between his regular meals as light restoratives, which sort of fillip his constitution appears to require so often that he is soon held responsible for all disappearances whatsoever upon the premises, and thus becomes a far worse domestic scourge than any landlady's cat that ever was fabled. Nevertheless he fattens on the diet, and emu grease is held in great esteem by both colonists and natives as a cure for bruises and rheumatism. The flesh seems to be generally considered a sort of cross between bird and beast, as I have heard it compared to beef, pork, and goose.

The emu's eggs and feathers bear no resemblance to those of the ostrich, the eggs being coloured of a deep green with a beautiful roughened surface, and the feathers (of which a singular peculiarity is that two plumes spring from each quill) are crisp and curly, so that when they are worn upon the head as an ornament by the natives, and mingle with the natural hair, the effect is perplexing at

first sight to a stranger. A very handsome "apron" for a fire-place in summer is made by hanging the skin of a large emu at the back of the open hearth.

In a wild state neither emus nor kangaroos will approach within five or six miles of the colonial towns, excepting under great pressure of thirst; but the opossum, who is assisted by his small person no less than his nocturnal habits in escaping observation, frequents every place where there are tall trees to climb, or fruit-gardens to be robbed.

The Australian opossum, or *koomal*, as the natives call it, differs in many respects from that of other countries. A description of it under the name of Vulpine Phalangist occurs in Mr. Woods' 'Illustrated Natural History,'* but his information that it is a "slow animal" can have been furnished him only by those persons who never saw an Australian opossum in its wild state. Dash, dart, spring, and scamper are the words which properly characterise its movements, and the nearest approach that it ever makes to a walk is a measured trot with a strange kind of swag, owing to its shoulders being so much lower than the hind quarters. When full grown an opossum is of the size and weight of a wild rabbit, the fur exquisitely soft and thick, mostly of a grey colour, but frequently dark brown tinged with yellow. We only once saw an opossum that was snow-white, and the kind was so uncommon that the old lady who brought it to our door for sale, asked us no more than we considered to be about twice its worth, in proposing that we should "give her a pound for it."

It is very common to see children with a young opossum for a plaything, but less so to find parents who will long

* See vol. i., pp. 466, 467.

permit the toy to be retained. Its excessive liveliness at night destroys not only the sleep of the household, but also all its crockery, for the creature plays such antics when it is shut up within four walls, that nothing of a brittle nature is safe which can be thrown down, or broken by articles upset upon it from above; in fact, I am disposed to think that a bull would prove himself but mild and inoffensive in a china shop, compared with what could be effected by two good active opossums. Also when Bishop Salvado says, in his description of Australian animals, that he has had many tame opossums at the Mission-house, and that they play without doing any harm—"*senza ledere*"—the unavoidable inference of readers who know the sports most in favour with domesticated opossums is that the Benedictines either had no plates at all, or were restricted by their rule to the use of wooden trenchers only.

The first opossums that I ever saw were two young ones which had just been given to some children, who had placed them in an advantageous position in a little tree at the back door of their father's house, and then stood surveying their new property with great pride. The opossums, meanwhile, dazzled by the broad daylight, were looking as sleepy as owls, and as incapable of voluntary movement as clothes hung upon a bush to dry. A few days afterwards I met the father setting out on a long walk, with a basket on his arm containing the identical opossums, which he was intending to let loose at the farthest point of his destination. Had he taken the apparently obvious course of turning them out of doors near his home, the cat-like attachment of the opossum to

familiar walls would have ensured the return of his tormentors the same night.

However, in spite of our neighbour's experience, I was not unwilling to accept as a present an opossum which was brought to me by a poor fellow who had captured it whilst he was at work in the bush. It is a pity that in giving the opossum its name, zoologists should have chosen one so ill according with the English language as to render certain its wrong pronunciation by all but well-educated persons; nevertheless as pet names, whether of children or domestic animals, are always allowed to undergo unphilosophical changes, we hoped that in styling our opossum "Possie," we might be pardoned for dropping the awkward first syllable. A Spaniard who was steward of the ship in which we returned to England, and who was bringing home an opossum, not only modified its name to suit his own tongue, but went a step farther, and, with the courtliness of his nation, added to it a title, dubbing the creature *El Señor Posimo.*

I have compared the kangaroo to a booted man hopping about the house on one leg, but the movements of the opossum suggest, on the contrary, those of a person who has taken his boots off for the purpose of making as little disturbance as possible. This impression is strengthened by the manner in which the fur on the legs terminates in a sort of frill just above the little bare white paws, giving them the look of tiny feet with socks on, or of hands covered with soft gloves.

The long sweeping tail, rich in fur on the upper side, is seamed underneath with a narrow strip of skin immensely strong and thick, which gives it purchase when hanging

on the boughs, and causes, to those who handle it for the first time, a sensation as of something odd and unexpected. The fore paws of the opossum are slight and fragile, somewhat like those of the kangaroo, as might be expected to be the case since both animals use them as hands, and convey their food to the mouth with them, but between the hind feet of the two animals there is no similarity. An opossum's hind foot reminds one in a certain degree of the foot of a cockatoo, both creatures being climbers, and their feet framed in such a manner as shall secure a firm hold upon the boughs of the trees in which they live. A curious supernumerary little claw upon the opossum's hind foot serves him as a pocket-comb, but neither the claw nor the use that he makes of it is mentioned in any account that I have read of him, nor have I seen it recorded that, like hares and cats, he follows the praiseworthy custom of frequently washing his face.

At the time of our becoming possessed of Possie she was so young as to be incapable of doing much mischief, and for the first fortnight she fixed upon no settled place of abode, but was always causing excitement by turning up in out-of-the-way unexpected places, where she lay fast asleep, and was only discovered when search for other missing articles was made, thus fulfilling what seems an universal law of nature, that if people look for one thing, they generally find another.

We at first thought that her choice of dormitories was indiscriminate, but she proved to be simply experimenting on their different merits until she should have found a hiding-place completely suited to all her requirements. This standard being eventually reached by her discovery

of the bottom of an old carpet-bag, we resigned all prior right to it in her favour, and hung up the bag on a nail in a little empty chamber which we gave up to her as "Possie's room" thenceforward, thinking that if we could not tone down her bump of destructiveness our next best course was to take from her all chance of employing it.

I lifted her out of the bag every morning and gave her a breakfast of milk, which she would drink most eagerly, diving her head deep into the jug, but as she grew older she weaned herself, and chose tea in preference. In course of time she would either jump upon my shoulder at breakfast and curl her tail round my throat, or would sit beside me on the table holding bread in her fore paws like a squirrel; showing no signs of native wildness unless we gave her something that she thought especially nice, such as cake or apricots, when, seeming to fear that the possession of such dainties might be disputed, she would instantly scamper across the floor with the prize in her mouth, and dashing up a flight of shelves would sit on the topmost one to enjoy her feast in leisurely security.

The time at which she slept most heavily appeared to be about four o'clock in the afternoon, but in the earlier part of the day she was easily awakened; and if I held a bunch of flowers at the mouth of the carpet-bag they would be gently drawn inwards, and sometimes a little pink nose would rise above the opening, but this was only when the flowers were of a sort that Possie best liked, as roses or raspberry-jam blossoms. Sugar and preserves she also ate very greedily, and seemed in all respects so delicate a feeder that for a long while I doubted whether people spoke truly in telling me that opossums were in

the habit of eating small birds. Possie, however, shook my scepticism by one day getting hold of a plume of feathers and tearing them to pieces with her fore paws, as viciously as a cat might have done; and, on our voyage home, the titled opossum belonging to the Spaniard dispersed all my doubts on the subject by devouring a Java sparrow before my eyes, though happily for the sparrow it had died prior to being eaten.

This love of devouring birds has helped, I suppose, to earn for poor Possie's race the name of "vulpine," though I do not see the reason of bestowing it especially on the Australian opossum. It does not rob poultry-yards like the opossum of Virginia, nor is its personal resemblance to a fox particularly striking, though no doubt its large eyes, broad forehead, and keen-looking nose are, to a certain extent, vulpine characteristics. Neither had Possie any gifts of dissimulation, whereas in Virginia "'possuming" means much the same as "foxing" in England.

She did not always choose to return to the carpet-bag after breakfast, but would sometimes hide under our eider-down quilt, and there sleep the whole day through, waking up, if I caressed her, to lick my hand with the affection of a dog. At sundown in summer-time we used to take her into the garden, and whilst twilight lasted she would follow us about quietly; but as soon as night closed in she would come to a halt, and with back erect, head raised, and ears stretched forward, assume a listening attitude; then of a sudden, as if she had distinguished a familiar voice calling to her from a distance, she would spring away and disappear in the darkness. The first time that she acted thus we imagined that she was irre-

trievably lost, and returned out of spirits to the house; about two in the morning, however, a gentle spring against the door of our bed-room aroused us from our sleep, and I went to open it, letting in as I did so a flood of moonlight as well as the truant, who entered boldly, like one permitted to return late from the play or from some other kind of evening entertainment, and evidently very anxious for supper.

There seemed to be for Possie a magical attraction in any dark hole, and not long after this ramble she discovered an opening in the calico ceiling of our room, by which she could run to a corner amongst the rafters, a sleeping-place apparently far more to her mind than either the carpet-bag or the eider-down quilt. Her reasons for preferring the roof were precisely those that made us object to it. We had wished to try the possibility of inducing her to be less nocturnal in her habits, but from this new abode there were no means of enticing her before her own time for waking, which was generally after dark; when, if we were not on the watch, she would creep down and escape to spend the night in the open air, returning, it is true, with such regularity to knock at the door that, if I knew she was gone out, I always, as a last act on retiring to rest, set out her supper, to which she betook herself in a most orderly and methodical manner immediately on admission.

If the doors stood open on account of the heat she would awaken me with springing on the bed to let me know that she was come in, and once I was startled out of my sleep with the noise that she made in trying to lift off the lid of the sugar basin, with which she was well

acquainted, by sticking her sharp-pointed nose through the handle. In winter-time when the doors were not open at all hours of the twenty-four, she did not so easily get out without leave; and it was by no means unusual, if I went from one room to another in the dark, to find her drop upon me suddenly from the roof, alighting on my shoulder or my head, like a soft heavy bundle, and steadying herself by wrapping her tail round my face or my throat.

Through close observation of her habits we were enabled, to a great extent, to falsify our neighbours' predictions that we should rue the day that ever we petted an opossum. To do the good folks justice they had not been sparing of their prophecies, and, with a solemn look at our chimney ornaments, had foretold the breaking of "every mortal one of them." But we found that Possie's spirits rapidly increased with the later hours of night, and that for a little while after dark she was not one whit more dangerous amongst nick-nacks than a lively kitten. In playing about a room, at this early stage of the night, she gave offence to no one but our little dog, who persisted in regarding her as an interloper, and often looked appealingly at me when molested or disturbed, as if asking that the affront, which she herself was not permitted to notice, might be resented by her mistress.

There was one temptation, however, which Possie could never resist,—if a nosegay was within reach she would always try to get at it, and I sometimes found her sitting bolt upright before one that had been arranged with care and trouble, snatching out flower after flower, and eagerly transferring them to her mouth, her large round eyes full

of wilfulness, and her figure reminding me of the "Bear and Ragged Staff," as she sat erect holding a flower-stalk in her fore paws. This delinquency proved, no doubt, a solace to the dog, since the rival had then come to the end of her tether, and was banished forthwith to her own quarters for the remainder of the night.

We always did our best to keep her at home on moonlight nights, opossum hunting being then a favourite amusement of men and boys accompanied by dogs. These latter, when once trained to the sport, frequently follow it alone and on their own account, and will often molest the whole neighbourhood for hours together, by pertinaciously barking beneath a tree where some unlucky fugitive has taken refuge.

When our fruit was ripe we had yet other reasons for wishing Possie to content herself with her own spare room and carpet-bag. Opossums are said to scent apricots from a long distance, and their way of eating them is to taste a piece out of each apricot on a tree, but to finish none; and as they pursue the same method with all kinds of fruit, they quickly ruin the entire produce of a garden.

Possie had been our playfellow for about two years when we began to notice that her pouch contained a tenant. This was especially perceptible whenever she ran up and down a long bamboo rod that served as a staircase to her favourite hole in the roof; and the matter was placed beyond doubt, one day, by the appearance of a little hind leg, which she put back again in a great hurry. Some time afterwards, in the month of August, in rainy, gloomy weather, I found her very comfortably established behind a curtain with her young one sitting in front of

her; and whereas the little leg that I had seen at first was as bare of covering as is a new-born rat or rabbit, its whole little person was now dressed in a beautiful fur coat. I put mother and child into the carpet-bag, and for nearly two days Possie never left it, seeming meanwhile scarcely to care for eating or drinking, and giving a little low hiss if I touched her.

After a time she came out to be fed as usual, but returned quickly to the bag without loitering over her meals, showing no desire to leave the little one, for whose sake she even abandoned her nightly "constitutional." When we had at length succeeded in decoying both of them out of the carpet-bag, Possie judged it expedient to change the scene by a removal to the hole in the roof; performing the journey thither as usual by means of the bamboo, up which she made a dash with an air of vast importance, the young one being seated on her back, and its tail lashed tight round her body. It was very pretty to see the two at feeding-time, sitting side by side, and eating like squirrels, the young one snatching the mother's portion from her paws, and the theft amiably submitted to. People came to look at the pair as at a most unusual sight, and old colonists told me that they had never before heard of an opossum breeding in captivity; but it would have been nearer to the truth to compare Possie's position rather to that of a highly-favoured prisoner on parole.

By the time that her fur had grown quite shabby with the effects of the long-continued game of pickaback up and down the bamboo, she appeared to think it fitting to introduce her daughter into society; accordingly the two

left home together one night in order to see the world. The chaperon knocked at our door on her return very late and alone, leading us to suppose that she had lost her young charge; we were therefore somewhat surprised next morning to find near the house, in the branches of a peach-tree, the poor *débutante*, looking very miserable, drenched with dew and half-blinded with the rising sun. I handed back to Possie her progeny, which she seemed not a little pleased to dry and comfort; but the next time that she took it out she lost it altogether.

She had now acquired such a taste for dissipation that she could not be content unless spending every evening abroad, and our endeavours to keep her within doors on moonlight nights were frustrated by her biting a hole in the thatch of her own apartment. This act was soon supplemented by her choosing for herself a more distant sleeping-place, which we could never discover, and for about a year she paid us visits nearly every night, knocking as usual at our door to be let in to supper, but maintaining a strict reserve as to where she lodged, a fatal secrecy that eventually caused us to lose her.

Whilst she had occupied the little room and the carpet-bag we had always been able, on leaving home for a few days, to commit the charge of her to Rosa; not that the arrangement pleased either party, for Rosa revenged on all opossums a bite through her thumb-nail which she had once received from a wild one, and Possie, having wit enough to feel herself disliked, lost no chance of retaliating, and would even run at Rosa like a cross dog. But when Possie insisted on a separate establishment, it was difficult to have her cared for in our accidental absence, and so at

last, on returning home from a fortnight's visit in another district, there was no Possie to welcome us, nor did she ever reappear. Probably she had knocked many times at our door during the fortnight, and being as often disappointed, had finally joined her own people. Our friendship had been not only very close for above three years, but uninterrupted by a single disagreement, and in the recollections that rise up, as our thoughts look back to Western Australia, little Possie and her pretty ways have a very prominent place.

CHAPTER X.

WHEREIN NATURAL HISTORY MERGES INTO AN ACCOUNT OF SCARCITY OF WATER.

Parroquets — *Twenty-eights* — Rosella parroquets in pomegranate-tree — Native brings Rosella nestling — Love of pancakes — Wild Rosellas decoy away my tame one — Supposed single specimen of parrot — Crows — *Silver Tongue* — Wagtails and swallows — *Bell-bird* — Cockatoos — Swans — Cockatoo broth — Startled in the dark — A thankless offer — Kylies used in killing birds — Painting a kylie — Bronze-winged pigeons — *Ngowa* — Method in which *Ngowa* prepares nest — Rare birds driven into inhabited districts by want of water — We lose turkey — Painted snipe — Cat's tribute to fidelity of artist — Cinnamon-coloured heron — Moths and other marauders — Fish called *Coblers* — Snappers and mullet — Crawfish — Fresh-water turtles — Frying turtle-eggs proves a bad experiment — Affectionate disposition of aborigines — Wild ducks — Khourabene's complacency at a well-filled bag — Game laws — "Father and mother, I must hook it away!" — Strong feeling of ownership with respect to land on part of natives — Metempsychosis — Forest laws less severe amongst Australians than amongst ancient Normans — Accumulation of water in consequence of felling timber — Amends made by white man — *Corobberies* — Mortality and early deaths amongst natives — Bishop Salvado's way of dispersing combatants — His remonstrances produce no effect with native husbands — Drought — Want of tanks — Floods — Swollen river renders farm-yard impassable — Washing on river bank — Inconvenience of distant wells — Temptations to gossip at wells — Anecdote of encamping at night without water — Enthusiastic welcome of boy and pony — Custom capable of sweetening brackish water.

THE birds most common in our vicinity were various kinds of parroquets. One variety was coloured green and blue faced with yellow, reminding one of a footman's livery; these would skim across a cornfield in little flocks like a flash of green light, but met with no greater consideration

than other robbers of grain whose feathers are more homely. The name by which these parroquets are usually known is *Twenty-eight*, on account of their cry resembling a repetition of those two numerals. As cage birds they are much valued, are soon tamed, and easily taught to whistle; I have heard a *Twenty-eight* that could even manage a few bars of the "Prairie flower."

Bright as the *Twenty-eights* are their plumage is but plain compared with that of another parroquet called the Rosella, which, like the former, is barely so large as an English blackbird, excepting for the greater length of tail. Of these last parroquets, the breast and throat are of a deep brilliant red, the cheeks yellow, and the back and wings of green mingled with dark blue. A pomegranate-tree with half-a-dozen Rosellas perched amongst its shining leaves, and ripening fruit, looks like an illuminated initial vignette in an old missal. I had often seen these gay little creatures in our garden; nay, I am sorry to say that they had formed a part of the many natural curiosities brought in by our cat, for whom very highly-coloured prey seemed to have an especial attraction; but my first intimate acquaintance with the Rosellas commenced with one that a native brought me, freshly taken from the nest. I had never before had the care of a half-fledged orphan bird, and for the sake of keeping it warm I often carried it in my gown-pocket, and allowed it to sleep in the same receptacle when the dress was hung up at night. Thus I saved my bird's life, and lengthened my own by the habits of early rising which the chirps of my nestling forced upon me, making sleep impossible after the sun was risen.

In a very short time the Rosella was sufficiently advanced to be put in possession of a cage, which he did not take to very kindly; when I let him loose in the morning he would show his pleasure by dancing up and down upon my hand, twittering his little song close to my face, and fluttering his wings with the most evident delight.

On account of his fondness for society, and his love of seeing all that went on, his cage was usually hung in the most frequented of our verandahs, where no sooner did he see Rosa passing backwards and forwards with preparations for laying the cloth for dinner, than he would begin jumping on and off his perch to attest his approval of her punctuality, knowing that when the first course was disposed of, it would be her duty to bring him in upon a tray, together with the dishes of the second. He then hopped upon the table with a bold expectation of welcome, which, together with his bright red breast, often recalled to us an English robin; and, if the bill of fare comprised a dish of pancakes, he would pounce upon them with more eagerness than on any other dainty, picking at the crisp edges, and now and then giving little rapid chirps, as if to notify that he approved of the cookery but could not afford time to say much. However pancakes are one thing and freedom is another, and all my bird's affection for his favourite food could not enable him to resist the blandishments of his wild neighbours, when he once obtained the chance of getting away. His wing had at first been kept clipped, but I fancied that the sight of the scissors, when the feathers were to be cut, made the little creature frightened and unhappy, so that I had lately

trusted to his great tameness alone to retain him about the house. "Dicky," as we called him, did not sufficiently appreciate this sacrifice to friendship, and after having lived with us long enough to have become, in his way, quite a little celebrity, he watched his opportunity and flew off irrecoverably.

It might have been supposed that a land so abundant in parroquets would have also been prolific in parrots, but a delicate little race of grass-green birds not larger than a hen linnet, represented, I believe, the only kind of *true* parrot in Western Australia. In a cage these diminutive parrots, (for which the native name is *Kower*,) are very difficult to rear, but, as they seem to be of the love-bird species, it is possible that the unsuccessful attempt which we made to bring up a single specimen might have had a different result had we experimented on a pair. There were not wanting birds of a soberer hue that reminded us of feathered friends at home. Plenty of sooty-backed crows contrasted with the gay colours of the parroquets, and the pretty little *Silver Tongue*, which made havoc with our ripe pomegranates and pecked out the seeds with its long slender bill, was not unlike a small thrush.

But the two kinds of birds about whose identity there could be no dispute were the wagtails and swallows; the former bird being known by his provincial English name of "dish-washer," as if he had been a poor relation of the genteel wagtails at home. This bird's short song, consisting of the words, "Pretty creature, pretty creature," pronounced with the greatest distinctness, was repeated by him all day long from the first peep of dawn, as if

he were absorbed in perpetual admiration of his little mate.

The nests which the swallows built under our eaves were made with an entrance shaped something like the neck of a bottle, and this peculiarity of architecture, together with the shortness of the bird's tail, were the only distinctions that we ever observed between the swallows of England and those of the southern hemisphere.

I have already mentioned the perplexity into which we were thrown by the ventriloquism of the frog, and the *Bell-bird* also seemed possessed with the same wish to conceal its individuality. The note of this bird was so exactly like the sound of the click of the capstan pawl in drawing up the anchor of a little yacht, that it not only made one long to set sail, but brought the sea-shore tantalizingly before the mind's eye, in the midst of the dry hot forest.

Often a loud screaming in the air would announce a flock of cockatoos, either white or black, flying overhead, and flights of wild fowl also would sometimes pass over the house, but amongst these last we could not enumerate the well-known black swan more than once or twice. The sable plumage of the Australian swan does not extend to the breast, which is covered with soft white down; but this is not a handsome contrast of colours, and gives the bird rather a magpie look, very different from the brilliant appearance afforded by the scarlet tail feathers of the black cockatoo when set off by the jetty hues of the body and breast. The white cockatoo lives chiefly upon roots, which Nature has enabled the bird to dig for in the driest weather, by furnishing him with

a large bill shaped exactly like a pick-axe. A flock of these busy delvers hard at work turning up the ground in search of grain just sown, their eyes surrounded by the curious broad blue rim peculiar to white cockatoos making them look like a gang of navvies in spectacles, is an object of such especial disgust to the farmer, that it is no wonder that he tries every plan to keep his cook in a good supply of them, more particularly as they make capital broth.

I was sitting alone one winter's night, with no light but that of the fire, when I was startled by the apparition of Khourabene, or rather by the sudden gleam of the whites of his eyes and the white wings of a cockatoo dangling from his hand—these being the first objects that I could distinguish in the darkened room, which he had entered without any previous knocking at the door. The purpose of his visit was explained by his offering me the cockatoo as an equivalent for "baccy," which I could not give him, as there happened to be no tobacco in the house. I told him, therefore, that he should have some tea instead, but the offer of tea to a tobaccoless man, and one moreover who, by his own account, had been wandering in the bush for two days without smoking, fell as flat as did the district visitor's present of flannel to those children in Thomas Hood's tale who were crying for a Christmas pudding. Grievously disappointed at the failure he snatched his useless pipe from his arm-band, saying very sulkily, "I kill my pipe," and deliberately broke it in two.

The flat curved wooden weapon, called a *kylie*, which the natives have invented for the purpose of killing several birds out of a flock at one throw, looks not unlike a bird

itself as it whizzes (or *walks* as natives say) through the air in its circular and ascending flight; and in a crowded fight it is a very formidable missile, owing to the difficulty of avoiding its apparently ubiquitous and hap-hazard course. "Too much kylie walk" was the description given us of a native fight by one who had been prevented from joining the affray by an attack of illness, which he defined as "too much cough."

The natives take great pains in the manufacture and finish of their *kylies*, and I found Binnahan and a black uncle one day very busy adorning his stock of them in a fanciful pattern of emerald green and vermilion, from the contents of a shilling colour box which we had given her. These weapons are by no means to be despised as a means of supplying the table with game when in the hands of a clever native, and when the birds at which they are thrown are of a gregarious nature, (as cockatoos or wild fowl,) though of course the *kylie* is no match for the gun as far as filling the larder is concerned.

But the use of a fowling-piece seems to come as naturally to the natives as that of their ruder arms, and it is a frequent practice with the colonists to employ one of them as a sort of hunter, or game procurer, especially when the bronze-winged pigeon is in season. These lovely birds have often been described, but no words can picture the beauty of the quickly changing hues of the neck and breast, upon which the light glances and flashes as it does on the plumage of the humming birds. The pigeon when in full feather requires to be aimed at either on the wing, or from behind if taken sitting, as otherwise the thick plumage of the breast prevents the shot from penetrating.

When cooked these birds are a very dainty dish, but their predilection for the "berry poison" renders great care necessary in preparing them for the table, and also in preventing dogs and cats from eating the entrails.

There is, however, amongst edible birds none that can at all compare with the one known to natives as the *Ngowa*, and to naturalists as the *Leipoa*, which is one species of those birds that have gained a front rank amongst feathered celebrities, by practising a system of artificial incubation. It lays its eggs in a mound of grass and leaves, which it heaps together to the size of twenty or thirty feet in circumference, and two or three in height, and then keeps watch in a thicket nigh at hand for the moment when the chicks are ready to leave the shell.

The *Ngowa* is larger than a pheasant, which in taste it exactly resembles, but it has not the pheasant's tail, and its shape is rather that of the blackcock; the feathers are beautifully dappled white and brown, the latter inclining to red. A person once told us that he had heard of *Ngowa's* eggs being hatched by a barn-door fowl, and that a cross-breed had been obtained between these tame *Ngowas* and common poultry; but, though we saw no reason to think the story improbable, it was one that we were never able positively to substantiate.

Many birds existed in the colony which were so rarely seen near the settled districts that, in spite of Khourabene's sportsmanship, we should never have become acquainted with them had not one winter been so unusually dry as to compel them to venture from the wild eastward sand plains to our district in search of water. That the *Ngowa* was one of these we had a proof in the curiosity

and wonder expressed at sight of it by a settler of many years' residence in the colony, who happened to be calling at our house when Khourabene returned after a successful day's shooting, and laid four at my feet.

We lost the only wild turkey that we ever saw through the excessive flurry of delight into which Khourabene was thrown by catching sight of it passing over our house towards the river; his hands shook so much in his haste to load the gun that he could not put in a proper charge, and our expected feast flew away from a flash in the pan scarcely so loud as the laughter of us the bystanders, leaving Khourabene's feelings in a very damaged state, but itself quite uninjured.

This same winter a wisp of seven of the painted or pictured snipe, a bird never before seen in Western Australia, paid a visit to Barladong. They were all either shot or snared, and the remembrance of them is associated in our minds with an unlucky and provoking accident. The young colonist who first discovered them had brought one to my husband, who was very anxious to preserve it, and had taken the greatest pains to prevent the long bill from being injured while skinning the neck and body, which was rather a difficult task. He had succeeded quite to his own satisfaction, and had also stuffed the bird preparatory to mounting it properly. The cat, however, thought it looked so lifelike that she pounced upon it, and tore it to pieces ruthlessly, doubtless a great compliment to the artist, but one with which he could willingly have dispensed.

Amongst all rarities, however, we saw none that delighted us more than a beautiful cinnamon-coloured

heron, with its long white crest no thicker than a wheat straw. A skin of this bird was brought to me, by the same lucky young sportsman who had given us the snipe, which I added to the collection of curiosities that I was making in the hope of gratifying my friends on my return home with many a scarce and graceful gift. But in so warm a climate the frequent airing and turning over of either curiosities or clothes is very burdensome, and if this is neglected the pitiless moths not only have it all their own way, but much of what they leave untouched is riddled by an insect called the silver fish.

Nor does even this last devourer close the list of the marauders upon our goods and chattels. We had a great many plants of the minor bamboo in our garden, which reaches the height of sixteen feet or so, and is much in request with children who want a fishing-rod. There were some little fellows who often came to beg bamboos, and the request being one day accompanied by another for some fish-hooks, my husband, in searching for them, chanced to open the book which had contained his rather expensive collection of trout and salmon flies; but it seemed that they had been as attractive to the skin beetles as he had once hoped that they would prove to the fish, and each parchment-leaf contained a naked hook and nothing more.

The fish called *coblers*, which the boys hoped to catch, resembled eels somewhat, and were not ill tasted, but were more remarkable for the severely poisonous nature of their sharp-pointed back and side fins than for any merit that they possessed as food. These disadvantages considered, we should have wondered at the pains which were taken by many persons to catch *coblers*, had they not been,

crawfish excepted, almost the only kind of river fish that was procurable at Barladong.

At Fremantle fishermen were rewarded by finding good snapper and mullet, which were excellent when dried and salted, and seldom made their appearance in our town in any other condition, being hawked for sale by a lively youth, who never failed to recommend his ware by biting pieces off the specimen fish which he carried in his hand as a sample.

Besides crawfish and *coblers*, our river boasted of fresh-water turtles, which looked so hideous, with their snake-like necks longer than their shell-clad bodies, that I was content to take on trust all that had been told me of the goodness of turtle broth, without wishing to test its merits personally.

The eggs which this creature lays are white, and very long in proportion to their breadth. Binnahan once brought in an apronful of turtles' eggs that she had found beside the river, but instead of sucking them raw, as I had expected her to do, she begged that she might be allowed to fry them, being apparently under the impression that one sort of egg was as fit to cook as another. The frying-pan was accordingly placed at her disposal, but I did not inspect the cookery, and I noticed that she never repeated the experiment.

We soon found that a native, if treated with kindness and consideration, would become much attached to his employers and give proof of a most affectionate disposition, an experience confirmed by others who had spent their whole lives in the colony. Khourabene had become fond of my husband very soon after his first acquaintance

with us, and when on one occasion he found that his master during a period of illness could fancy no food so much as wild ducks, he would scour the bush far and wide in order to procure them for him. If our good savage had heard of ducks being seen on a pool within a few miles of our house, he would make his appearance in a breathless state of excitement, begging us to give him the gun, with which he would hurry away to secure the prize. His complacency at success found vent in little patronizing observations addressed to the birds themselves, whilst he sat on his own especial log of wood by the fire-side, and picked his share of their bones in the kitchen.

These happy days were brought to an end by our making the unlooked-for discovery that savages, equally with civilized people, have their game laws, and that by these Khourabene was prohibited from shooting for us any longer. He surprised us one evening by entering the room with tears streaming down his face, and repeatedly sobbing out the words, "Father and mother, I must hook it away!" he explained, in his strange mixture of Australian and cockney dialects, that the other natives had had an indignation-meeting to discuss his audacity in daring to bring us game off their land (Khourabene's "settlement" in the parochial phraseology of home being in another district), and that they had threatened to spear him if he continued to do so. We tried to comfort him, and in our ignorance of native customs treated the matter lightly, but he continued to cry bitterly, and bidding us good-bye he disappeared.

At first we were disposed to fancy that he had been a

little drunk, but, on making inquiries of those persons who best knew the natives, we learned that any native who, without permission, kills wild animals upon land belonging to a tribe of which he is not a member, incurs the penalty of death. The feelings of the natives are very strong with respect to ownership in the soil, and some of them will still point to certain spots as theirs which have long been cleared and occupied by Englishmen.

The first colonists who took possession of the country were supposed by the poor savages to be the souls of their dead compatriots, who had returned with white faces. In some of the new-comers such strong personal resemblance to deceased native individuals was thought to be detected, that the surviving relations gave the strangers the names of the departed, and would even assert that upon their bodies would still be found the mark of the spear wounds which had caused the deaths of their prototypes. As these ideas still prevailed to a certain extent, my husband came in for his share of metempsychosis, and was known amongst the older natives by the name of an aboriginal gentleman who had been speared in the back at some bygone battle.

But to return to the early days of the colony: when the supposed ghosts began to make a fresh distribution of the land, regardless of the real owners' lien upon it, and to infringe their game laws, the original proprietors became "very troublesome," as the phrase goes for native behaviour under such circumstances. They continued to oppose the appropriation of the land until cowed into submission, and seemed disposed to treat the invaders with as little hospitality as our own ancestors showed towards Julius

Cæsar, for whose ill reception by their forefathers modern Britons are not in the habit of expressing much remorse.

The sort of punishment which, even 1200 years after the Roman invasion, would have been legally inflicted upon anyone who had dared to drive off or kill the deer and fill the royal or baronial chases with sheep and horses, or to plough up large portions of the land, may be inferred from the spirit of our ancient forest statutes; and the revenge taken by the natives of Australia upon those who seemed to them to be guilty of similar infractions of the laws and customs of their country, has certainly been far less severe than was the judicial severity of our Norman and Saxon ancestors.

In the case, too, of the poor Australian, it was not only his land and the wild animals upon it of which he feared to be deprived by the entrance of the white man: the symbol of submission, that was offered in old times by a weak nation to its stronger neighbour, included water as well as earth, and there can be no doubt that the jealous feeling of proprietorship with which each different tribe guarded its scanty supplies of water helped much to strengthen the opposition towards the interlopers.

In respect to water, however, even the natives themselves are ready to acknowledge that some amends has been made by their conquerors, since the cutting down of the trees, which had for ages absorbed the moisture in the soil, causes the water, which is not now required for the nourishment of those great masses of vegetation, first to accumulate in the earth, and then to break forth as a spring. The same deficiency of rain that, in the dry winter of which I have been speaking, brought us rare birds

from such great distances, also caused our neighbourhood to be filled with an unusual number of natives, who constantly made the nights noisy with their merriment.

Two "corobberies," as the native dances are called, I especially recollect, when a most disturbing and oft-recurring hubbub was kept up all night by the whole company, who beat and stamped upon the ground in unison, producing an amount of noise that was perfectly astounding, their bare feet and the hardness of the soil being taken into consideration. The piece, which would probably otherwise have had an indefinite run, was in its third rehearsal, when the police interrupted the performance in mercy to the white people, who had been unable to sleep during the two previous nights. We never again saw so many natives collected together at any one time, nor was it merely that they dispersed on the ceasing of the drought which had caused them to congregate around us.

During the five years which we spent in the colony, we remarked a sensible diminution by death of those natives who had been our friends, and we noticed that the fatal cases occurred amongst the young and middle-aged rather than the old. More than twenty years before, when Bishop Salvado (from whose work I have already quoted) had parted a little mob of fighting viragoes by laying his cane soundly on the shoulders of the strongest, the men, whom he reproached for standing by whilst their women were killing each other, excused themselves by saying "that there were plenty more"; other reasons would have been required for the men's neutrality at the time of our landing in Western Australia, and still more so when we left it.

Slight as was the drought of 1865 in that country compared with what was suffered in South Australia from the same cause, yet it was felt severely. Horses perished in the bush, and ewes were too much weakened by insufficient food to survive the lambing season; whilst on many a poor man's field, that had been sown to feed a family of children, pigs were the only reapers of the stunted stalks which, from want of rain, had never ripened into ears of corn.

I always felt it a matter for surprise that, with so many prisoners who needed employment, the Government had not set the example of making large tanks for husbanding the rain-water, of which, in an ordinary winter, there is a greater fall during the rainy season than occurs in England throughout the year.

Floods are almost as characteristic of Australia as droughts, and two years before we went there rain fell to an excess which will be matter of tradition at Barladong so long, at least, as anyone remains to remember going to school in a boat instead of by the footpath in that wet winter. I heard an anecdote of that sloppy period from a family with whom we became intimate, who told me that their farm-yard was divided by a narrow river pool, on one side of which stood the house, and on the other the stables, with a little wooden foot-bridge between. In the course of one day the water increased so much in height and strength, that the sons who had been since the morning on that side of the stream which was nearest to the stables were unable to cross it at eventide, although within speaking distance of their family, and near enough for their sisters to throw them over provisions. After waiting two days or so, the waters showing no diminution,

the flood-bound party made the best of their way on horseback to a bridge, and reached home by a circuit of some thirty miles.

Incidents of this kind were a strange contrast to those of 1865, when we knew of people being obliged to send eight miles for water every washing day. When a river pool is within reasonable distance it is customary, in ordinary seasons, to convey the clothes to the water rather than the water to the clothes. A fire is then lighted on the water's edge, and a booth of green boughs erected for the washerwoman, beneath which she stands at her tubs, securely screened from the sun.

The inconvenience of occupying a residence where there was not only no water on the premises, but where the nearest well was quite two hundred yards distant, appeared overwhelming to us when we first took up our abode at Barladong. When I learned, however, that many of our poorer neighbours lived at a much greater distance than ourselves from a well, I found that the comfort of our position exceeded theirs in as great a degree as the conveniences of our own house were surpassed by those of an English one, where water is "laid-on" upon every floor.

The labour and loss of time in fetching and carrying water are not the only evils involved in distant wells. The much-frequented spring is, as Goethe well knew, the fountain-head of half the gossip in the neighbourhood, and the fact of the poet having been able (in his 'Faust') to transmute the chatter of village maidens into an immortal scene, gives no consolation to an unfortunate housewife distracted with waiting for her servant, who has been sent for a bucket of water and remains at the well talking idly with the

girls whom she finds congregated there. There is no doubt, also, that the games of marbles, with which the small fry of male water-carriers occupy themselves till the claims of first-comers to the well have been satisfied, are protracted to a much greater length than any outsiders would consider necessary.

A curious anecdote, that illustrated both the scarcity of water and the distance that people sometimes walk to fetch it, was told me by a friend. In making a long journey, to a remote part of the colony, night had overtaken her party before reaching any watering-place that was known to them, and, with the prospect of many hours of thirst, more wearisome to bear because shared with her by her child, she was sitting sadly in her tent door when there suddenly emerged from the trees a woman and girl carrying each a bucket. My friend had come so far without meeting a living soul that this unexpected apparition, in the dim light, of two persons going about their ordinary business made her scream with surprise, and perhaps she mentally compared the incident to that of an angel's visit when the strangers showed her a spring at no great distance, whither they were on their way to fetch water, having already walked two miles from their own home.

It is not always the absolute non-existence of water near a person's own dwelling that necessitates so much labour, since often, in digging a well for the supply of the house, only salt springs are found at first, and in this case drinking water, at all events, has to be procured from elsewhere, either in perpetuity or until better luck attends the well-sinker.

One of my friends told me that for some time she and

the rest of her family had no water to drink but such as was daily brought in a keg by a boy, who fetched it from three miles distance on a pony, pony and boy being met on their return by every child, dog, and fowl belonging to the homestead, all racing out to obtain a taste of the contents of the keg. Nevertheless custom, which can reconcile us to so many things, causes even a moderate quantity of salt to be forgotten, and a colonist, who once paid us a visit, accounted for his horse appearing but little to relish the water of our pool by the fact of the animal having been so long used to a brackish well in his own field as to prefer it to water which was quite fresh.

CHAPTER XI.

Winter a favourable time for exploring parties — Explorers turn back for want of water — Second expedition — Excitement at setting out — School copies — Second disappointment — Wild puppies give great umbrage — Bushrangers — Impassable bush serves as prison wall — Fire-arms indispensable to bushrangers — Fatal occurrences — Native trackers — Chain-gang — Conditional pardons — Fact of having been in Western Australia suppressed by immigrants in Adelaide — Tale of escape — Discontent of ticket-of-leave men on cessation of conditional pardons — An oppressive state of law — Truck system — Anecdote of shoemaker — Benevolent master — Tendency of truck system to destroy gratitude — Archdeacon Paley's opinion of paying ready money — Girl thinks it high time bucket should be worn out — Reckless expenditure of wages — Savings' bank discouraged, and why — French convict saves money — Barter — Paying one's creditor with eggs — Dressmaker paid with melons and almonds — Hospital admission — Nursing the sick — Presents to patients forbidden — Hospital orderlies — Dentists — French Colonel — Ophthalmia — "Bunged" eyes — Squints — Measles and hooping-cough — Mortality from measles amongst natives — A "corporal act of mercy" — Native hops and tea — Holloway's pills — Woman severely burnt — Broken leg — Dislocated hip — Answer to *coo-ee* — Finding of human bones — Lost child — Discovery of relics — Reasons for easily losing one's way in bush — Anecdotes of Irish neighbour and the poor maid-servant — We spend a night out of doors — Silence of bush at night — A perplexing adventure — Horse brought back by Khourabene — A "dropped hip" — We are thrown out of cart and feel injured by horse's indifference to what has happened — Traces repaired with knitting-cotton.

DURING the long hot summers of Western Australia the bush was gradually denuded of the dried-up grass and herbage which forms the food of both sheep and cattle at that season, and by the time that the first showers of rain fell but little was left to supply the wants of the flocks

and herds except the curious foliage of the Xanthorrhœas, usually called "blackboy grass." The mid-winter months, however, reinforced the country with fresh stores of both grass and water, and though, as I have said in the last chapter, the time was not favourable for making excursions of mere pleasure, there was no other so suitable for the dispatch of exploring parties in search of new sheep-runs, or in pursuit of still more important objects of discovery.

We were present at the departure of one such expedition, which was sent out in order to complete certain promising discoveries to the eastward which had been commenced the year before. On the former occasion the leader had succeeded in carrying his party across a rugged belt of rocky waterless ground, and through a wide track of almost impervious scrub, to a plain which had been described by the natives beforehand as abounding with emus and kangaroos. As the presence of these animals on any considerable extent of country is a certain proof of the existence of both grass and water, great hopes were entertained that the small plain of pasture land, upon which the adventurers had succeeded in arriving, would prove to be the commencement of a really valuable district.

Unfortunately the season was one of great drought, the winter rains had been confined to the country near the coast, and had not extended to the interior; the surface water had nearly all been dried up by the sun, so that at each water hole that could be discovered the supply was so scanty as to be barely sufficient for their wants. The plain itself seemed to be well watered in ordinary seasons, and the indications of the country around

all seemed favourable, but after the most careful search not a single spring or well could be discovered, and all hope of farther progress that season being at an end, the party contented themselves with naming their discovery the "Hampton Plains," in honour of the Governor, and turned back to await a kindlier winter.

The second expedition of which we witnessed the departure was composed of three gentlemen as leaders, and a mixed party of pensioners and convicts to act as road-makers and well-sinkers. The intention of the Government in sending out so strong a body of men was to open a fairly practicable track, over which sheep and cattle might travel in safety, leading to the country which had been discovered on the previous occasion. Having reached this spot, and having marked out the road and planned the wells, the larger number of the convicts were to be left to finish the works, under supervision of the pensioners, whilst the leaders, with a much smaller party, should prosecute the search to the eastward, and also in a southern and northern direction.

Much curiosity had been excited by the promising character given of the Hampton Plains, and some persons were even so sanguine as to hope that they would prove the commencement of a line of country stretching away so far to the east and south as at length to join some portion of the territory of South Australia. The wish for such a communication with the sister colony was devoutly expressed by all the settlers, but the hope of really finding it had long since died out of most people's minds.

The mere starting of so large a party of riders and sumpter horses, increased also by the company of many

persons who wished to see the safe beginning of the march, and to accompany the explorers as far as their first night's halting-ground, caused much stir and bustle in Barladong; everyone turned out of doors to wave a farewell, and even in the schools "expedition" became a favourite word to set as a copy in the writing lessons of that week. But the season was neither propitious nor well selected, and, as there had lately been a series of rather dry winters, the supply of water in the bush proved scantier than ever, justifying the forebodings of experienced persons, who had feared that the time was inopportune for making fresh discoveries.

In some places it was evident that no rain had fallen for two years, and it soon became equally plain that, unless water could be found, the lives of all would be sacrificed by any attempt to penetrate the interior to a greater distance. It was therefore agreed that the idea of investigating the grass plains must be once more abandoned, and the baffled expedition retraced its steps, bearing a heavy load of disappointment, as well as a few bush curiosities picked up in the course of the march.

Two little puppies of the wild dog or dingo were amongst the live-stock of the return party, much to the disgust of the country settlers, who seemed to think that the explorers in their character of bearers of ill news needed not to have added this aggravation. "Was it not vexatious enough," they said, "that the expedition had failed to find new land, without bringing back native dogs to eat up people's sheep on such land as was there already?" Considering, however, that the Hampton Plains were dependent on surface-water only, the fact

of their continuing a *terra incognita* might possibly have been a fitter subject for rejoicing than was dreamt of in the colonist's philosophy. A successful survey of the plains would have been followed by the dispatch of men and sheep to take possession of them, perchance but to meet the same fate that befell the flock-owners of the riverless northern districts of South Australia, where, after a long continuance of drought in the deadly season of 1865, the stock entirely perished, and the proprietors narrowly escaped with their own lives.

As to the wild dogs, their race had been so carefully extinguished, in the vicinity of Barladong, that the only living specimen I ever saw was one of the before-mentioned puppies. It was black and sleek, with long pricked ears, and had an eager, restless look, which appeared to justify the sheep-farmers' animosity; moreover, the unlucky wretch, as if resolved to run headlong upon its fate, set to work killing chickens like an old hand at the first civilized tenement to which it was introduced. The origin of these dogs is quite a mystery; that they are not indigenous in Australia is universally allowed, and conjecture runs wild as to whether their progenitors swam ashore from a shipwreck, or were landed from canoes, in company with the persons by whom the continent was originally peopled.

There was another class of persons, unconnected with explorers, who chose the winter as the most favourable time for wanderings in the bush, and not a year passed without instances, more or less alarming, of prisoners running away from road parties and becoming bushrangers. The frequent recurrence of such events caused Binnahan to decide very confidently that an engraving in an illustrated

almanack, which the artist had intended to be a representation of Shakspeare's arrest by Sir Thomas Lucy's gamekeepers, was "a picture of bushrangers."

To all outward appearance nothing is more probable than that a large number of convicts should escape at any moment. The convict depôts in the country districts are so unprotected that there seems no reason why the men should not walk away, without even the preliminary of knocking down a warder. Still more incapable than the depôt warder of retaining his so-called prisoners in custody does the officer in charge of a road party at first sight appear. His position, to the eye of a stranger, would present that of one who was abandoned to the mercy of sixteen or twenty desperate men, beyond sight or sound of aid except the chance passing of a teamster, whose own antecedents would probably be similar to those of the wayside gang. The truth is, that the detention of the prisoners, and consequently the safety of the free community in Western Australia, has depended mainly on the impassable and inhospitable character of the bush, which serves the purpose of a vast wall around a natural jail the inmates of which, as a policeman once said to us, "may escape from the prison, but cannot get out of the prison yard."

As a body the prisoners have sense enough to know that a certain amount of restraint upon their liberty is better for them than to become complete outlaws by attempting acts of violence, with the alternative of the gallows if captured, or a death by hunger and thirst in the bush if free. Nevertheless, as surely as winter filled the water holes, we used to hear of escapes from the road parties.

Most of the fugitives were probably more anxious for change and adventure than anything else, while each individual secretly cherished the idea that *he* could succeed, though many had failed, in accomplishing a final exit from the colony. As a riddance of the prison dress must of course be effected without loss of time, the first act always was to enter some lonely house and seize upon clothes and such fire-arms as came to hand, and, when once possessed of these, the bushrangers, as they were thenceforth called, wandered about till recaptured, seldom committing worse violence than frightening people into giving them anything and everything that they demanded.

To inspire the degree of dread sufficient for levying supplies guns were absolutely necessary, and those householders who owned a fowling-piece or rifle were, on that very account, more liable than other persons to receive domiciliary visits in search of weapons. I have seen the mistress of a family oppressed with a sense of insecurity because it was "known" that there was a revolver in her house, and a call might therefore be looked for from the bushrangers who were then abroad, on any day that they had ascertained the absence of the master.

Compared with the number of prisoners who were at large, whilst we were in the colony, there were not as many cases of attacks fatal to life as might have been expected, but the encounter with the police, when the prisoners were once more apprehended, rarely took place without bloodshed, and two captured men were at different times brought in wounded to Barladong. One party of bushrangers deliberately murdered a former convict, in whose house they had taken shelter whilst evading the police, and also

indirectly caused the death of another, by first making him excessively drunk, in payment for fetching them a keg of spirits from a cave where it had been hidden, and then leaving him lying in the bush exposed to the full heat of the sun. Late in the night the head warder of the convict depôt aroused my husband, and begged him to return with him to visit the poor creature in the hospital, to which he had just been brought, scorched beyond hope of recovery, although the summer was not fully begun or the heat yet very intense. He was barely able to relate what had occurred, and died in an hour or two afterwards.

In the task of searching for runaway prisoners the police are almost always assisted by native constables, whose keen sight and extraordinary powers of observation are capable of following a track even over the hardest rocks, a circumstance well calculated to excite our wonder, in spite of our knowing that the natives' familiarity with the bare ground dates from the time when it was his nursery floor.

Confirmed runaways, who had given much trouble to the police, were punished by being placed in the chain-gang at the "Establishment"; but there were some men who seemed to be proof against all impediments, and more than one escape, even from this heavily-ironed crew, occurred whilst we were in the colony. The fetters that they carried were of such size and weight that the first time I ever saw the gang I turned my head on its approach to look, as I supposed, at a jingling team of horses coming up behind us. I then perceived that the noise was caused by the irons on the legs and feet of fifty men who were walking, or rather shuffling along, in ranks of four abreast, and dressed in parti-coloured clothes.

Before the prisoners marched soldiers with mounted bayonets, and behind, bringing up the rear, were other soldiers carrying revolvers on the full cock. The chain-gang was being thus escorted back to the "Establishment" after working on the road, and the sight was most painful, for though each individual had probably deserved hanging, one could not help feeling that the present condition of most of the prisoners was in all likelihood the inevitable result of bad early training.

When we first went to Western Australia it was customary for convicts who had served a portion of their sentence to receive what was called a conditional pardon, by which they were free to leave the colony, and to land in the ports of any part of the world, those of Great Britain and Ireland alone excepted; but this licence naturally causing a migratory flow of convicts to Melbourne and Adelaide, rendering necessary to those colonies a great and expensive police force, they, by their inter-colonial laws, have refused to recognize the validity of conditional pardons, and compel all persons who come from Swan River to show certificates of having entered the latter place as free men, before permitting them to step ashore.

Even when the passports are pronounced satisfactory the owners of them think it best to say as little as may be, after landing, of ever having been in Swan River. I learned this by reading a letter which an emigrant had received from a friend in Adelaide, warning him, in case he came there, not to speak of any acquaintance with Western Australia. The truth is, the neighbouring colonies are justified in suspecting that a good deal of contraband

humanity is landed on their coasts in spite of preventive measures, and instances occurred under our own knowledge of men with conditional pardons having left Western Australia for Adelaide, and successfully running the blockade.

One of these adventurers had married an emigrant girl who sympathized but little in his desire to get away, and urged upon him that it was better to remain where his past life was already known, than to live elsewhere in continual dread of recognition. However, her arguments were no match for his determination, and, having contrived to land in Adelaide without detection, he sent for her to join him there, though not till after the lapse of so many months as made us fear that he intended to cut himself altogether adrift from his wife. A letter that he wrote us, full of joy on meeting her again, was a satisfactory proof of the injustice of our apprehensions.

The conferring of conditional pardons came to an end before our return to England, and, though their abolition was a matter of necessity if the other colonies were to be kept in good humour, yet it bore hard upon some individuals who wished to recover their respectability, and were now, as they said, deprived of all incitement to good behaviour by being compelled to remain for the full length of their sentence in no better position than that of prisoners released upon their ticket-of-leave, unable to be abroad after ten at night, or to carry a gun, or to remove into another district without a written pass which must be *visé* on reaching a police-station.

A conditional pardon, on the other hand, had invested its owner with a kind of *status*, which a man so much valued that it was a pledge for improvement in his

conduct, despite the inconceivable difficulty besetting such an attempt on the part of a convict in Western Australia. His own class is continually robbing him or throwing temptations in his way; false swearing out of spite goes on to a frightful extent, and the man who wishes to live in peace and keep out of mischief can do so only by avoiding, as much as possible, all communication with his neighbours.

It may easily be imagined that, as so large a part of human sorrow springs from crime, there can be no place where misery, of one kind or other, comes oftener before the eyes than in a penal settlement; in fact we used to feel that, until we lived in one, we had never seen thorough wretchedness. But it was too unlike a "locus penitentiæ" for a parallel with Dante's purgatory, even though the scene of the last-named place, by a strange coincidence, is laid in the southern hemisphere.

It was also a fruitful source of discontent that in case the employer of a ticket-of-leave holder brought a charge against him resulting in imprisonment, he might be, and sometimes was, mulcted of all wages that were due to him before committing the offence, besides being sent to jail—a state of law which offered a temptation to such masters as were needy and unprincipled to pick a quarrel with a convict servant, (when the work was completed which he had been hired to do,) in order to escape the payment of the wages due by accusing him of damaging property or neglecting his duties.

The crowning grievance, however, was the system, which universally prevailed in the colony, of paying wages by truck, every up-country settler keeping a shop or store

for his labourers, and uniting in his own person the various callings of grocer, flour dealer, butcher, boot-maker, and seller of ready-made clothes to his own men. There is no need to point out the probability that this arrangement should be abused, or to say much of the evils of an institution which, at home, has been thought so intolerable as to be abolished by Act of Parliament.

Most things, however, are modified by change of locality, and the prominent feature that "truck" exhibits, in a penal settlement, is that of being the best scheme which ever was devised for disgusting rogues with honest labour. Whilst it chafes the free labourer it utterly disheartens the convict; and a disheartened convict is a hardened one, infinitely less ashamed to be drafted back to the "Establishment" than is a labourer at home to apply for out-door parochial relief.

I remember that a ticket-of-leave man and his wife came to ask our help who had taken service upon a written agreement as to wages, though neither of them could read writing. On dismissal by the master they were paid nothing, as it appeared by the employer's reckoning that they had already received from him, whilst in his service, goods to the full value of all wages that they were entitled to demand. The man and his wife were utterly penniless, and begged us, besides the food that we gave them, to lend them a covering for the night. The pair ought, however, as the wolf suggested to the crane in the fable, to have felt thankful that they escaped so well, for the truck arithmetic is not famous for striking an *even* balance, being, on the contrary, much better adapted for finding a servant in his master's debt. When this discovery has

been once made, the servant may calculate his chances of solvency by working the traditional question in arithmetic as to the time that it will take a frog to get out of a well who climbs two feet upwards every day, and falls three feet downwards every night, applying the answer to his own case.

It would, moreover, be erroneous to suppose that the truck system affects only the parties who are immediately concerned in it. For instance, a shoemaker brought home to my husband a pair of boots that he had ordered, and asked a sovereign for them, and when the price was objected to as being unreasonably high the shoemaker acknowledged that it was so, but said that he felt justified in asking it ever since learning that the same kind of boots with which he supplied a store at fifteen shillings the pair, were there retailed at the price of a pound. The shoemaker had gained his information by doing harvest work for the storekeeper and receiving, in part payment of it, a pair of these identical boots, which, when thus returned to their manufacturer in the form of wages, were considered to represent five shillings more than the sum at which he himself had originally valued them.

I often thought that there was a strong likeness between a system of truck and slavery, and one family feature, common to both, may certainly be found in the manner in which each is softened or made worse according to the circumstances and disposition of individual masters. We knew one who, so far from enriching himself at the expense of his men, supplied them with flour, when it was dear, at a lower cost than its real value; but benevolence of this kind, in the small thanks that it re-

ceived, served less to redeem the character of "truck" than to render it odious from another point of view. A state of things that admits of the employer being general purveyor to his labourers is fraught with such obvious advantages to the principal, that, rightly or wrongly, he will always be suspected by his servants of making a profit on their wages, and this suspicion, in destroying all proper relations between the two parties, diminishes respect, and is incompatible with gratitude.

Another disastrous consequence of paying wages in goods is the improvident habits that it encourages in the families of labouring men. I think it is Archdeacon Paley of whom the anecdote is told, that he always made "his women pay ready money for all that they bought, because it was such a check to the imagination." Now the sprightly fancy of a working man's wife who, instead of receiving from the husband's pay a weekly sum to lay out and to make the best of, is compelled to have a running account at the master's store, has no such wholesome check, and as she seldom or never has the handling of money she does not learn its value.

What with truck and barter the young people especially could scarcely be expected to know the real worth of any article which was procured from shops or stores. I heard a characteristic proof of this from a lady, who had unfortunately neutralized a lecture to her servant on the care which was necessary to save a wooden bucket from being spoiled by the sun, by specifying the number of years that she had had the same bucket in use. "If it is as old as all that," replied the little colonial damsel, "it is quite time it should be worn out."

If a "privileged class" can be said to exist in the colony, it is that of the shepherds, who receive their wages unabated by truck, and are paid from thirty to forty pounds a year with the addition of their food; nevertheless, the men's own folly, combined with other agencies, will often rid them of a twelvemonth's wages in a few days. A shepherd comes into a town for a holiday, after a year or two's solitary life in the bush, much like a sailor going ashore from a long voyage; he wants amusement, and in absolute default of anything better, goes into a public-house, and remains there, drinking and treating others, until the publican knows that his customer has no money left, and dismisses him to begin the world again. In this way, incredible and disgusting as it may appear, we have known of shepherds getting through two years' wages in one fortnight, without ever stirring from the public-house into which they first entered.

That the character of the tap-rooms in Western Australia is often very bad needs no stretch of the imagination to conceive, and, in such cases as these that I allude to, actual robbery has, no doubt, often assisted the drink in dispersing a man's money; but that there were publicans who would permit men to be drunk continuously for days together, was a fact not to be controverted. The duty upon spirits, which is something like a tax of eleven shillings upon each gallon sold in the colony, instead of being prohibitory has only helped to make the matter worse, having led, as might have been foreseen, to an excessive amount of adulteration, and to this cause, rather than to the climate, which is sometimes supposed to induce it, may be ascribed the frequent instances of insanity.

A benevolent person whom we knew proposed the establishment of a savings' bank for the shepherds, and endeavoured to induce an old colonist to assist him in the scheme, but only met the answer, "Teach 'em to save their money? that's not what we want; if they once begin saving they will be our servants no longer!" And the stupid old man, who had himself begun life as a day labourer in England, could not be brought to see that to improve the condition of individuals would help to enrich the community at large.

Good servants, however, who were bent on saving, could contrive to put by money in spite of all disadvantages; and a French convict, who afterwards bought land and did very well, once brought to my husband as much as thirty-eight pounds of his earnings, with the request that he would take care of the sum for him. I was glad when the Frenchman carried away his bank-notes a few weeks afterwards, for in Western Australia no one feels safe with money in the house or on the person, so that cheques are given for sums as low as half a sovereign.

Money, however, is so very scarce in the colony, that if we wanted change for a five-pound note we were generally obliged to take a part of it in little scraps of paper, on which were written "orders" upon different persons for the value of a few shillings; while labour was by no means the only commodity which was paid for by the primitive practice of barter. There was nothing uncommon in hearing of a dog being exchanged for a gallon of wine, or of a sempstress receiving a couple of fowls in return for needlework—an embarrassing mode of transacting business, even when people are ever so well disposed to pay what they

owe, and their creditors willing to take an equivalent in any imaginable form. For instance, a man went to some persons of our acquaintance living in the bush to ask them for the payment of twenty-three shillings that they owed him—a sum of money which in England he would hardly have thought it necessary to take a cart and horse to bring away, as if he had been carrying bullion to the mint; nevertheless on the occasion of which I am about to speak, a tumbril of some kind or other would have been found extremely convenient.

Arrived at the house, and preferring his request, he was told by the inmates that it was impossible for them to pay him in money, as they possessed none; they therefore looked about for what they could give him instead, and the wealth of a bush lady consisting principally in her poultry, she proposed paying him in eggs, of which at the latter end of winter a prodigious number are laid by the unlimited number of hens which roam around the lonely dwellings, and roost upon the trees or roofs, according to their fancy. To this the man consented, seeing no other probable way of getting paid, and a basket being found which could somehow be fitted on his back, it was forthwith packed with eggs, a dozen for each shilling, which was one more egg than the current shillingsworth at that time, as the debtors were anxious to do the thing handsomely, and it was, no doubt, solely in mercy to their creditor's bones that they were not more generous.

With this freight it might be supposed that he would at once have gone, or rather staggered, to market; but amongst other hindrances to trade, markets have no existence in the colony, and there is no choice but to take

farm produce to the stores, where goods only are given in exchange for it, unless the would-be seller is content to take much less than its value. At the nearest store therefore, which was seven miles off, being unwilling to take payment in kind twice in one day, he was fain to accept one shilling for sixteen eggs, instead of for eleven; but this was so disheartening that he tried hawking the remainder at private houses, and having thus disposed of some few dozen eggs on rather better terms, and broken a good part in the frequent shiftings, he ended by clearing fifteen shillings, and thinking that he had not made a bad day's work.

Perhaps a sort of payment even more mortifying than the last was one that I heard of from a woman who, in place of eleven shillings that were due to her, received a certain quantity of melons and almonds—an arrangement to which she agreed, like the man who took the eggs, because no better mode of settling her claim was forthcoming, but which rendered long hours of laborious needlework as unprofitable to her as if their sole object had been that of supplying her family with sweetmeats.

I adverted a few pages back to some of the social disabilities which the ticket-of-leave holders found so galling, but they had this one advantage over men who boasted conditional pardons, that the former were admitted into hospital without any difficulty, whereas the latter, if received as patients at all, were expected to pay five shillings a week, unless the charge was specially remitted through a representation to the stipendiary magistrate from the medical officer.

In nothing did the true character of the colony as a vast

jail more strikingly appear than in the fact that the clergyman of a district had no discretionary power in such cases. A man, for instance, would present himself at the parsonage very ill, and wanting help immediately, but with no means of paying for it—more frequently than not he had journeyed on foot for a long distance—the doctor might be absent, (sent for perhaps to attend an accident a hundred miles away,) and, if the magistrate refused to admit the applicant into the hospital without the normal medical certificate, we either must turn the man away in his suffering condition, or take the course usually pursued by my husband, which was to nurse the man himself at our own home until the doctor's return, when if we succeeded in gaining the benefits of the hospital for the patient, well and good, but in event of the contrary we retained him under our own care.

Close to our house, and within the enclosure of our field, we had an empty cottage in which at different times we lodged several poor sick wayfarers, and though all of them were convicts, we never missed an article from our premises during four out of the five years that we spent in the colony. At the latter end of our stay, when transportation was drawing to a close, and the mother-country was availing itself of the last remaining chance to be rid of its worst criminals, we could not boast of such complete immunity from theft, but I do not believe even then that we were ever injured by any whom we had nursed in illness.

We used occasionally to make jelly for the men in hospital, until the doctor, at whose request we had done so, left the neighbourhood, and was succeeded by another, who begged us to discontinue our cookery, as without the most

stringent rules against all presents to the invalids from persons without the walls, it was impossible to hinder the introduction of spirituous liquors concealed under one guise or another.

The patients in the hospital were waited upon by orderlies selected from the prisoners in the depôt, and there was an old fellow who so long filled the situation that one might have supposed he had been permanently elected to it, but the truth was, he could not be happy beyond the well-known prison walls, and if ever released upon his ticket-of-leave lost no time in trying to forfeit it, that he might be drafted back again to his accustomed home. He had been a sailor in his earlier days, and to live under some kind of discipline was, perhaps, become to him a second nature. However we lost sight of him at last, and a young prisoner replaced him who was as anxious to regain his liberty as the older one had been to part with it, and soon after his appointment very joyfully announced to us a remission that he had received of six months from the term of his original sentence, in consideration of protracted night nursing in various bad cases. On account of this man's kindness to the sick my husband took much interest in him, but we did not remain long enough in the colony to see how he would go on after liberation.

There are many persons who are fit for pupilage only, and one finds this eminently the case with convicts, some of whom, so long as they can work under another's eye, will fulfil certain allotted tasks exceedingly well, and show also much amiability of disposition; but the same men, if removed from control and allowed to become their own masters, will almost immediately be guilty of the most

childish misdemeanours. Whether this would be the case with poor "Rother," we had not the opportunity of knowing, owing to our early departure.

Whilst serving as hospital orderly he had picked up some medical skill, and told us that he intended, when released, to turn it to account by following the trade of a dentist. In this he would then have been troubled with no competition but secure of an extensive practice, that is, if he knew how to supply false teeth, for, as far as tooth drawing is concerned, the dry climate pretty well supersedes the need of pincers and forceps by causing the teeth to drop out even though undecayed. It is sadly frequent to meet with comparatively young persons who have lost all their front teeth, and yet the profession of manufacturing dentist is scarcely represented in the colony, and if, now and then, a travelling one appears, forthwith a rush is made by old and young to obtain his services.

The most skilful of these itinerant dentists was a French Colonel of Zouaves, who had been so severely wounded, in winning his many decorations, that he could attain a moderate degree of health only by constant change of scene, and paid his expenses in journeying over the world by practising dentistry as he went along. The deplorable demand for an artificial supply of what the climate had removed, was a circumstance as lucky to himself as his accidental landing was to the inhabitants of Western Australia, and he carried off a rich harvest in fees, together with the pleasant consciousness of having retrieved to many youthful faces their lost good looks.

There is an old French saying that with fine eyes no one is thoroughly ugly and with bad teeth no one is completely

beautiful; now the climate of Western Australia, as if determined to reduce good looks to their lowest possible level, is not only inimical to the teeth but to the eyes also. As far as regards healthfulness I have no other drawbacks to mention, but these are very decided ones, and interfere not less with comfort than with beauty.

Severe cases of ophthalmia are happily less common now than in the early days of the settlement; whilst on the other hand influenza, or colonial fever as it is sometimes more correctly called, has become a prevalent complaint, almost an annual epidemic. Nevertheless affections of the eyes begin from the cradle, and are so often repeated during childhood as much to diminish the size of the feature, and to render a fine pair of eyes of rather unusual occurrence. Grown people are by no means exempt from this kind of affliction, yet the children seemed to have the largest share of it, partly, as I believe, from their eyes being nearer to the ground, off which, in summer-time, the radiated heat strikes like the hot breath of an oven.

Besides other predisposing causes, there is a species of fly which bites the eyelid in a most vicious manner, producing so much inflammation and swelling as to completely close up the eye—"bunging" it as the colonial phrase goes, an expression rather perplexing to a stranger when asked for the first time in a sympathizing manner, "whether he has ever been bunged?" With children the evil of a bunged eye does not always vanish with the subsiding of the swelling, but occasionally leaves a permanent squint.

As soon as the poor people found that we could compose eye-water it was in continual request, and though we

had neither rose nor distilled water to improve its character, yet the old remedy of sulphate of zinc stood its ground and gave great relief. As a set-off to these attacks of sore and inflamed eyes from which the children especially suffer, they enjoy a complete immunity from measles and hooping-cough, unless, indeed, these should happen to be introduced into the colony through inattention to the laws of quarantine. On more than one occasion that these complaints have been thus imported, they have run rapidly through the colony, but, after a time have again died out, without subsiding into the position that they occupy in England of constant and chronic evils.

Measles were brought into Western Australia, in 1860, from a ship that entered King George's Sound and landed one person ill with the disorder. It spread widely and rapidly, assuming a very virulent character, more especially amongst the natives, of whom so many died that both they and the colonists in alluding to the visitation spoke of it in terms that would have been almost applicable to a time of pestilence.

A lady of our acquaintance told me that on getting up one morning, she found a native woman who had been suffering from measles lying dead outside the house. As my friend had relieved her on the previous day, and had afterwards assisted her in walking to a distance of about a quarter of a mile, she presumed that the poor creature must have found herself abandoned by the other natives, in terror of the infectious nature of the disease, and that she had therefore crawled back alone to the homestead in the night rather than die in solitude. It so happened that the

two sons who composed the lady's family were both absent, and that, with the exception of a convict man-servant who refused to touch the body, there was no one but herself to perform the last offices. This man consented, however, to dig a grave, to which she with her own hands conveyed the lifeless remains of her poor fellow-creature in a wheel-barrow, and, without his further help, laid her in the ground.

The ignorance that we noticed amongst many of the colonists as to the commonest appliances for slight accidental ailments certainly bore testimony to the fineness of the climate, which, by rendering sickness rare, had caused homely remedies to be seldom studied; but, even if the "simples" which every cottage herb-bed at home furnishes had been in vogue, they could have thriven only in such spots as were moistened by underground springs. No doubt there must be native plants which, if their properties were known, might be made serviceable in illness; but beyond the red gum that flows from the tree of that name (*Eucalyptus resinifera*), which is useful in checking dysentery, I heard of no colonial specific. Neither, with the exception of native tea and native hops, did I ever hear of any plants which had been used for infusions.

The native hop is a little ground-plant, named by botanists *Erythrea Australis*, with which, on account of its intensely bitter taste, sugar-beer used to be flavoured when English hops could not be procured. As to the native tea, of which I never heard the botanical name, its qualities seem to be chiefly of a negative sort. It certainly did not "inebriate," and the only "cheerfulness" connected with it appeared to arise from the pleasure with which people reflected that they were now no longer

obliged to drink it. They regarded it as a thing of the past, belonging to the hard old times when China tea was often beyond the reach of thirsty colonists.

The great medical authority of persons residing in the bush is Mr. Holloway, whose merits receive ample compensation abroad for being somewhat overlooked at home. His portrait is hung affectionately upon the parlour walls, and his advertisements, which set forth the suitability of the same medicine to a dozen different disorders, are swallowed with as much good faith as the pills themselves. All things considered, the bush folks might have a worse guide, for Mr. Holloway's system has at least the recommendation of simplicity, and as there appears to be no greater mortality amongst those who take the pills than those who leave them alone, the natural conclusion is that they must be harmless.

Nothing shows the perfection of the climate more than the impunity with which persons can sleep out of doors at all times of the year, and the extraordinary recoveries which take place after bad accidents, aggravated as they generally are by the great delay that necessarily occurs in a large and thinly-populated country before medical help can be procured. A proof of this postponement came under our own immediate notice. We were sitting one evening, reading quietly, when a rap at the door startled us, and on opening it we found a man standing outside, who begged us to tell him how he could procure admission into the hospital for a young woman who had been most dreadfully burnt many hours before. She was subject to fits, he said, and in one of them had fallen down close to the hut fire with one of her legs across the burning brands

and had not been discovered until her thick leather boot was almost entirely consumed. She appeared to have had her baby of ten weeks old in her arms, and to have dropped it as she fell, for the child was on the floor near the fire, but had rolled itself out of danger. All this had happened in the forenoon, and the evening was now far advanced; much of the intermediate time having been unavoidably lost by the man in procuring the loan of a cart to convey her to the nearest town for help.

We scarcely knew what to do or what to advise; the convict hospital contained no accommodation for women, the reception of whom in such a place had never been contemplated, and, to involve us still further in difficulty, the colonial surgeon, who resided at the depôt, was from home. We followed the man to our slip-rail where he had left the woman lying in the cart, and when we came close to it we heard a low delirious voice talking about a baby, but the darkness of the night prevented our distinguishing the speaker for the first few moments, or perceiving that a good Samaritan was already there before us, in the person of a poor Irishwoman from a cottage over the way, who had previously directed the man to our door, and was now standing beside the cart trying to make the sufferer drink a cup of tea.

My husband decided that we must carry her into our own house, which we immediately did, and laid her in a bed as carefully as possible; both of her feet were burned, and on one leg so large a surface of skin was destroyed that it was but too evident that nothing less than amputation would be of any avail, as proved to be the case a week after, when the leg was taken off considerably above

the knee. Also, though we did not discover the full extent of mischief on our first examination, the flies, those terrible accompaniments to neglected wounds in a warm climate, had already attacked the burns.

The presence of so young a baby served still further to complicate the whole affair, and Rosa, whose kind nature was always ready at suggesting help, sent off a messenger to her sister, begging that she would come and take care of it. As to the poor woman herself she was one of the lowest description, both in character and class, and to all appearance sufficiently contented with her calling to desire no change for a better; nevertheless she bore most intense pain with an unselfish courage which commanded our admiration, frequently through the night begging us all to go to bed, and, as she expressed it, "not to mind her."

But the hardest trial to patient endurance, on the occurrence of any bad accident in the bush, is not so much the time that is required to fetch a doctor as the solitary position of the sufferer, who lies helplessly awaiting the discovery of his condition by some chance passer-by. The bush is so lonely, even on its highways, that a poor fellow whom we knew lay upon the ground, with a compound fracture of one leg, from six in the morning until three in the afternoon before being found. His case was made worse by the cruelty of a fellow-servant, who was with him when the accident took place, and who left him, promising to procure help from a house which was but a few miles distant, but who neither returned nor sent assistance. The day was one of the hottest of that summer, and the miseries of the sufferer were further increased by the ants which swarmed upon him as he lay on the ground. Yet,

wonderful to relate, he neither lost his life, nor even the injured leg; although at one time its preservation appeared so impossible that the day for its amputation was actually fixed, and my husband was asked by the doctor to be present on the occasion.

The history of another accident was told me by the settler's wife to whom it had occurred. Whilst driving a light cart alone, along a bush-track, it was overturned by one of the wheels striking against a "blackboy" stump, her hip being dislocated by the fall. She yet contrived, by crawling upon her hands and knees, to loosen the horse from the shafts, in the hope that his returning home without her would announce her disaster; but he disappointed her by stopping to feed, and she continued to lie upon the ground in solitude and agony for many hours, sadly aware also, as the day sped on, that her prolonged absence would excite neither surprise nor alarm amongst her own family, since they knew that she had left home with the intention of visiting a married son, and would presume that she had been persuaded to sleep at his house. An old native woman, a great-aunt of Binnahan, accidentally discovered her before night in this miserable condition, and treated her with the kindness that characterizes the behaviour of the aborigines in all similar circumstances, who, if they meet a white person lost in the bush, will invariably do their utmost to assist him.

Another lady told me that, having once lost her way on horseback, she tried a *coo-ee* on the chance of making herself heard by a fellow-creature, when a native, unseen by her previously, appeared as suddenly as did Roderick Dhu's men at his call, and not only guided her into the

right track, but also saw her safely to the end of her journey.

But to meet help in need thus quickly, was one unusually happy instance to set against many a tale of agonizing distress, and to contrast with other cases in which human bones are the only records of what has been endured. Twice whilst we lived in Barladong were such dismal relics brought in from the bush and given Christian burial, with none but mere shreds of circumstance to warrant a guess as to whose were the remains; and once my husband buried, as an unknown corpse, the body of a man who might have been recognized had any friend been near, and to whose identity the discovery of a bottle of medicine in his coat-pocket ought to have furnished an additional clue.

No histories of this kind are so full of misery as those which are told by parents whose children have perished in the bush. The details of such narrations vary but little, and one instance will serve as a specimen of them all. In most cases the home has been a lonely hut, erected, perhaps, near some spot where the father has been employed in felling and sawing the huge mahogany-trees, the place approached by a track almost invisible in summer-time, when the wagon wheels that come so seldom leave but little impression in passing over the dried-up flowering plants. The cleared space about a hut is as it were an island in the vast surrounding oceanlike wilderness, into which if a little child ventures alone death from privation is generally the consequence, even though so short a distance as a few hundred yards only may separate the sufferer from its heart-broken parents.

In an instance that came under our own knowledge, a child of three years old wandered away one morning from its home, and the mother, imagining that it was gone to watch its father at work in the saw-pit, felt no anxiety until her husband came home alone at dinner-time and asked for "little Tommy." It is impossible for words to picture the disordered state of a parent's mind at such a moment, nor will anyone doubt that the poor fellow spoke truth when he told us that those who had lost a child were far from fit persons to conduct the search for it. He and his half-frenzied wife examined, as they thought, every inch of ground for miles around their hut, and their search was continued through so many successive hours that, for a time, the father became blind with the strain upon his sight. In his despair he persuaded a shepherd to drive a flock over the ground near the hut, knowing that the appearance of any unexpected object amongst the brushwood will bring sheep to a sudden halt, and cause them to rush away hurriedly from the spot; but the instinct of the dumb animals and the untiring energy of the parents' love were alike foiled,—weeks grew into months and brought no trace, and the dreary consolation alone remained to them that the heat was so excessive, on the day the child was lost, that its sufferings could not have lasted many hours.

One evening, as the mother sat outside her door, in her own words to me "bewailing as usual," she saw a woman coming towards the hut with her apron thrown over a little box that she was carrying, and, instantly divining its contents, cried out in a distracted manner, before the visitor had reached the threshold, "Them's

my Tommy's bones!" The sad little relics had been discovered by a neighbour in a thicket but three quarters of a mile from the child's home, and the father must, as he said, have often passed within a few yards of the very spot. The body appeared to have been devoured by either pigs or wild dogs, and the tokens were few to identify, but a part of a little boot, and some scraps of a plaid frock, enabled the poor parents to recognize the remains as those of their lost darling.

The same causes which render so difficult the finding of anyone who has been lost in the bush, help much to facilitate the occurrence of such catastrophes. The scenery possesses sufficient variety to please the eye but no strikingly distinctive features to remind a person that he has wandered from the way, or to help him to regain it. The trees shut out the distant view and seem to be endlessly repeated, and if the traveller fares along, either thinking of nothing, or too much absorbed in meditation to pay attention to the road, one quarter of a mile's aberration may place him in circumstances which, for utter loneliness and forlorn destitution, can find no parallel excepting on a raft at sea.

Those who retain their presence of mind when they find themselves going wrong, and who have the gift of what phrenologists call "locality," will generally be able by observing the sun or stars to strike into a right direction, and it was thus that a good Irish neighbour of ours contrived to return safely to the company of her fellow-creatures, after losing her way for six hours in an attempt to convey her husband's dinner to him in the bush. The purpose of her errand shows how short a distance is quite

sufficient to bewilder the pedestrian in such a landscape, and a poor maid-servant, in undertaking a similar commission, got so completely astray as to be recovered only after a lengthened search that knocked up both men and horses. She owed her life to the perseverance of one of the party, who, when the others were for turning back and renouncing further search as useless, insisted, as a last chance, on exploring a little valley which they had not yet examined, and was rewarded by a faint answer to his loud *coo-ee* as he rode down the hollow. On entering the house the poor girl swooned away immediately, and the recollection of what she had undergone was so terrible, especially of the horror of the lonely nights, that her mistress told me she seldom summoned courage, after the first recital, to speak upon the subject.

Travellers are sometimes benighted on a road which they know well in daylight only; there is then nothing for it but to come to a stand-still, and to wait patiently for morning. It might naturally be supposed that a horse which was familiar with the way could be trusted to follow it; but his choosing to do so may possibly depend on the comparison that he draws in his own mind between the supper he is likely to get at his master's stable, and the one he can provide for himself in the bush. Under these circumstances an acquaintance of ours was much mortified at being compelled to spend the night under a tree, although his horse knew every inch of ground round about. With the reins thrown on his neck that he might follow the right course towards home, the animal elected to remain where he already felt himself completely so, and where he could enjoy the grass till daylight.

We once spent the night out of doors, when on our way to visit a friend whose house we had expected to reach early in the evening. Being ill acquainted with the road thither, we were unfortunate enough to alight upon a young misanthrope, keeping cows in a grassy place a few miles from what ought to have been the end of our journey, who, in answer to our question, "Were we on the road for Egoline?" gave a very confident though erroneous affirmative. The views were so picturesque that for a mile or two farther we passed our time in admiring them; but at last we began to think that, if we were on the right track, our friend's house was much farther off than we had been led to expect, and we looked out for it rather anxiously as the sun disappeared behind the woods. Once we fancied that we were near the place, and were sure that we could see upper windows with lights within them; but these soon resolved themselves into little patches of the red sunset latticed with the boughs of intervening trees.

Not long afterwards it became quite dark, and we found our wheels running on very different levels while descending, through the ruts, on a hill so steep and stony that, having reached the bottom without an overturn, we thought it was best to leave well alone and to make up our minds to go no farther. We therefore came to a stand, and determined, in colonial phrase, to "bush it"; so we unharnessed our horse, for whom we had luckily brought a bag of corn, and, having seen him begin to eat it, we collected pieces of "blackboy" and lighted a fire, piling it up to a great size with dead wood. We took the carriage cushions for our pillows, and spreading out our cloaks and rugs lay down with our feet towards the blaze like the natives. It would

have been thoroughly pleasant, had the accommodation included supper as well as bed; but what we most wished for was water, which of course it was impossible to procure. Nevertheless, I was glad for once to feel the solitariness of a night in the open bush, even at the expense of a little privation. A night bird was singing in a note something like a cuckoo, but with a hoarse foreign tone, and when he left off the silence was only once broken by a little opossum scampering up a tree near our fire. The picture was beautiful as we lay looking at the stars in the blue-black vault overhead, against which every twig and branch shone white as it caught the firelight, whilst the perfect stillness carried with it a sensation of awe.

We were awake soon after dawn, very glad to be stirring, and as we were quite out of our reckoning we retraced our steps towards the last house which we had passed. The poor horse was as thirsty as ourselves, and nearly overturned us in making an eager rush at a puddle near the wayside, but the spring when tasted was worse than nothing, being briny rather than brackish. About six miles from our sleeping-place we again espied the unlucky urchin with his cows; he did not wait to confront us, but dived amongst the trees as soon as we came in sight.

Our next adventure, although in the daylight, was even more perplexing. We had made a night's halt at the inn where we witnessed the execution of the black snake, and where not even the chance of meeting an incensed relation of the deceased could prevent our paying visits whenever we took a holiday, for, though only twenty miles removed from Barladong, a different soil produced an entire change in the aspect of the forest and such great variety of beau-

tiful flowers that, provided I could book my return by the next ship, I would willingly make a second voyage for the sake of once more seeing their like.

On occasion, however, of the especial visit to which I have just referred our stay was unexpectedly prolonged, at the intended moment of departure, by the startling intelligence that our nag had slipped his halter in the night and disappeared from his stable. We were not many hours in suspense about him, for in the course of the afternoon Khourabene rode up to our inn, mounted on the runaway. It seemed that the horse had lost but little time in getting over the twenty miles which lay between the hostelry and our house, and having re-entered his own yard, with a flying mane and tail erect, was instantly laid hold of by our native, who desired no better task than that of compelling the deserter to return to his duty.

Khourabene passed the remainder of the day in great dignity, sauntering about the inn door in the character of our groom, as we were simple enough to imagine, until we were undeceived by overhearing him decline to fetch water when the landlady asked him to do so, on the plea that he was "gentleman fellow, all same master." However, with a nice distinction of what his rank could or could not permit, he did not refuse her next request, namely, that he should shoot some parroquets.

Now it so happened that our horse, in common with many that are foaled and reared in the bush, had a defect in the hind quarters which, in colonial parlance, is called "a dropped hip," that is, one hip stands lower than the other, having either been injured by a kick from another colt or by striking violently against a tree when a troop

has been running wildly together. A dropped hip is no great disfigurement to an animal, nor does it tend very greatly to his prejudice unless he has had a very long gallop, or a very hard day's work, when the leg which has been hurt is apt to give way of a sudden and bring him down as if he had been shot.

We resumed our journey after waiting another night at the inn, thinking that we had thus given our horse sufficient rest, forgetting that, in addition to the exercise he had taken for his own pleasure, Khourabene, with a native's love for a gallop, was certain to have ridden him back at no slower pace, so that we must therefore be prepared for a downfall. Accordingly, when within a few miles of our journey's end and providentially at a very sandy place, without the least warning the dropped hip failed, and we were both thrown out of the dog-cart so instantaneously, that I could not help wishing it had been possible for us to have been spectators of our own speedy ejection as well as actors in it.

Our joy at finding each other unhurt was changed in a moment into a feeling of sad dilemma, as we beheld our poor horse lying on the ground like one completely flattened out on the road; it was, moreover, impossible to raise him except by first getting him out of the traces, and since he had fallen in such a position as to prevent these being unbuckled, it was evident that, if we could not cut him out of his harness, he would be obliged, like other over-worked creatures, to die in it.

Before leaving England my husband had received, as a parting gift from a relation, a knife which was supposed

to meet every exigency of colonial or civilized life upon all occasions in which knives could be serviceable to mankind: I need not say that, whereas he had always carried this knife about him when it was not wanted, he had it not in his pocket at a crisis which would have put its merits to the proof. It was a mercy that he had a razor to fall back on (metaphorically I mean, of course), which we lost no time in taking from our portmanteau, and whilst he cut the traces I stooped down to the horse's head, encouraging him with fair words to lie still, until we could set him at liberty. But there was no need for any representations on my part of the prudence of his keeping quiet,—the affair had evidently no novelty for him, and an injured conviction grew upon us, as we worked at his release, that he was not only equal to the situation but thoroughly accustomed to it also.

We had no sooner helped him up than he showed a perfect indifference to what had happened by instantly commencing to eat "blackboy" rushes; and the fact being established that he was unhurt and could stand as well as ever, we were next met by the question, how to reunite the leather traces which we had done our best to cut? I proposed the tearing of our pocket-handkerchiefs into strips, but my husband recollected a pair of half-finished socks which I had been knitting, and rightly suggested that they would answer better; we accordingly twisted the cotton into a resemblance of twine, and, the traces being joined by this contrivance, we once more put our horse into the shafts and proceeded towards home; but our confidence in him, and in the strength of our own

repairs, being about equal, we walked by his side for the remainder of the distance, and arrived at our own door in rather crestfallen condition, though luckily night had set in so that our misfortunes escaped the public gaze.

CHAPTER XII.

Bishop Salvado's history of Australia and of the Benedictine Mission of New Norcia in Western Australia — Missionaries dispatched by "Propaganda" — Rudesindo Salvado and Giuseppe Serra obtain leave to quit *La Cava* — Commencement of native vocabulary — Sad incident on reaching Perth — Formation of Missions — Captain Scully's proposal — Missionaries leave Perth and soon present travel-stained appearance — Disappointment in finding no water — Lengthened walk in search of it — Building of hut — Approach of natives — Insupportable suspense — Mode of propitiating natives — Natives assist in completing hut — Provisions almost consumed — Eating of grubs — Bishop unable to provide shoes — Musical entertainment — Help arrives too late — Patching clothes — Present of flour — Missionaries in character of surgeons — Tales by fire-light — "Jingy corobbery" — New views of Missionaries — Cannibalism — Infanticide — Tilling ground the best remedy — Scheme for founding monastery and native village — Perplexity about ways and means — Remittances from "Propaganda" — Laying the first stone — Pompey provides dinners for builders — Allotments — Wages — Habits of saving inculcated — Naming of heifer calf — Obstacles to success of Mission — *Cordon sanitaire* — Marriage of converts — Aristocratic ideas — Drinking tea in bush — Orphan child carried to Perth — Meeting between Father Salvado and little travelling companion.

I MUST now proceed to give some account of the Roman Catholic Mission where, in the words of our shipmate, "the bishop lived with the natives in the bush." I am the better able to do so as, a year before we left the colony, I was fortunate enough to obtain a copy of a history of Australia,* written by Bishop Salvado himself, which contains, in addition to much general information, an especial

* 'Memorie Storiche dell' 'Australia, particolarmente della Missione Benedettina di Nuova Norcia.' Per Monsig. D. Rudesindo Salvado, O. S. B., vescovo di Porto Vittoria. Roma, 1851.

description of the Benedictine Mission in Western Australia, and of the causes of its success in dealing with a people to whom the credit has erroneously been given of turning the edge of all tools that were ever used in promoting its civilization. No biographies are said to be so perfect as those that betray the author's affection for his subject, and the bishop's pen runs *con amore* in discussing the topic of his beloved savages, and speaking of their docility and intelligence.

The gradually decreasing numbers of the natives indicate sadly yet surely that they are not destined to share any exemption from that fate, which has already befallen so many aboriginal races, of dying out whenever the white man erects his dwelling amongst them. The West Australian, however, will not have passed from the earth's families without a chronicler, and the pages in which Bishop Salvado has enshrined his recollections of this simple people may be compared to the stones of a little cairn heaped beforehand to its memory. The book was originally written in Italian, and was afterwards translated into Spanish, which is the native language of the author; and I have ventured to make the following sketch of the information to be derived from its most interesting contents.

Twelve years had elapsed, since the foundation of the Swan River settlement in 1829, when its Roman Catholic inhabitants addressed an urgent entreaty to their bishop at Sydney that he would confer on them the boon of a minister of their own religion. At the time that the letter containing this request arrived at Sydney the bishop, Dr.

Polding, was absent in Rome with the object of impressing the needs of his vast diocese upon the Holy See, and it was not until the following year, 1843, on his return to Australia, that three Roman Catholic priests were dispatched to Perth. Subsequently, in 1845, the congregation of the "Propaganda" sent out a party of missionaries under Dr. Brady, an Irish bishop, for the purpose of converting the savages of Western Australia.

In addition to seven priests, who accompanied Dr. Brady, there sailed with him also a sub-deacon who was an English Benedictine, a French novice, one Italian, eight catechists, two laymen belonging to a religious order, and seven Irish Sisters of Mercy. Two of the priests, namely Rudesindo Salvado, the present episcopal resident in the bush, and his friend Giuseppe Serra, were Spanish Benedictine monks, who had, with some little difficulty, obtained permission to leave their monastery of La Cava, (situated in what was then called the kingdom of Naples,) in order to follow out the long-cherished wish of their hearts by becoming teachers of the heathen.

The party sailed from London in a ship called the 'Isabella,' and in the month of January, 1846, cast anchor off Fremantle in Gage's Roads. Here two landing-boats received the missionaries, which they had no sooner entered than the crew of the 'Isabella' shouted after them a hearty hip hip hurrah; and "we," says our historian, "replied in the same manner, for this hip (*'questo hip'*) is, under such circumstances, a far more expressive and joyous manner of wishing good luck than the Italian *viva*." These farewells over, litanies were intoned until the shore was reached, when the whole party knelt upon

the landing-place, and solemnly chanted *Te Deum laudamus.*

Whilst waiting for a boat, to take them up the river, the priests tried to make acquaintance with the many natives who were wandering about Fremantle. These looked hard at their unknown interlocutors, and merely vouchsafed the word *Marannia* to the foreigners' civility. Bethinking himself that in the Gallegon dialect a word of similar sound means deception, the good Salvado feared that even already the natives were distrustful of him, but on referring his doubts to his landlord, and learning from him that *Marannia* meant simply "victuals," our missionary immediately distributed bread, and wrote down the word in his pocket-book as the commencement of a vocabulary.

The beauty of the Swan appears to have made as much impression on him as on ourselves, for he says, "Each turn of the river presented a new scene, and a fresh occasion for praising God," but the arrival of himself and his friends at Perth was saddened by the death of one of the priests, who had never recovered the effects of a severe storm in the English Channel. A few days after the funeral the bishop held a council for the purpose of devising plans for the conversion of the natives, and, the opinion of each priest having been asked, it was unanimously decided to follow them into the bush. Three companies were therefore formed, and named respectively the Missions of the North, of the South, and of the Centre of Western Australia. For their support the bishop requested grants of land from the colonial governor, who accordingly presented the South and Central Missions with twenty

acres each, but the Mission to the North remained unendowed, as it was beyond the limits of the Swan River colony.

The members of the Southern Mission were the first to begin their labours. Leaving Perth upon the 6th of February, they went on foot to Albany, where they arrived about the end of March, and, making that town their central point, traversed the bush in every direction, seeking out the savages, and suffering at the same time every kind of privation. Kind-hearted Protestants who saw their necessity brought them such relief as they could afford, even the sailors belonging to vessels in the port contributing presents of food; but supplies of this kind being naturally precarious, and the health of the party giving way, they determined on abandoning the work in the South and taking refuge in the island of Mauritius, where a mission existed at that time under the care of an English Benedictine bishop.

The Mission to the North, consisting of three persons, sailed for Sydney, (being obliged in those days to circumnavigate almost the whole continent in order to reach their destination,) and, having arrived at Sydney, again quitted it for Port Essington in another ship which was wrecked in Torres Straits, when all on board perished excepting the captain and a Tyrolese priest, who were rescued and brought off from a rock on which they had taken refuge. The poor Tyrolese died two years afterwards, worn out with incessant labour and by the effects of a climate so unhealthy as to have since caused the northern coasts of Australia to be almost deserted by Europeans.

Another Mission, dependent on that of Perth, was also established at Guildford, under the care of a priest named Powell and a catechist; but being both of them driven back into the city by hardships and privations, Mr. Powell withdrew from the work in Australia and joined a Mission in Calcutta.

The party that had originally landed in the colony having been thus dispersed there now remained, out of the seven priests of whom it was at first composed, the two Spanish fathers only; and the spot on which to begin the labours of the Central Mission was yet unchosen. The question of fixing a site for this Central Mission was one requiring much consideration and anxious thought. It was evident that it would be wise to remove it to as great a distance as possible from the settled country, in order to avoid the evil effects of much intercourse of the lowest class of the white men with the natives; while, on the other hand, if placed at a spot too remote from Perth, the regular supply of provisions and necessaries would become impossible; not to mention the risk that the persons who might undertake to carry the stores would run of being lost in the attempt.

At this juncture, Captain Scully, a Roman Catholic who had resided for many years in the colony, came to visit the bishop, and relieved his perplexity by telling him of a spot at no great distance from his, Captain Scully's, run, where, the land being good and "savages abundant," he thought that a Mission might be successfully established. He added, moreover, that if the scheme was approved he would himself help to further it, by that most important boon in all colonial life, the gratuitous

carting of the necessary goods. This proposal being joyfully accepted the Fathers Serra and Salvado, with the French Benedictine novice and an Irish catechist, repaired to church at sundown on the 16th of February, previous to commencing their night journey through the bush.

They were in marching order, crucifix on breast, staff in hand, and breviary under the arm, as they made their way to the altar with some difficulty through a crowd of persons, Protestant as well as Catholic, who had assembled in the little building to bid the missionaries a farewell which all supposed would probably be for ever. On leaving the church a brilliant moon shone down upon the travellers, who were escorted along the road for some distance by their bishop and other friends; after a time these turned back, and the four pursued their way in company with the drivers of Captain Scully's wagons, one of which contained the property of the Mission.

A journey on foot of sixty-eight miles, undertaken in a Swan River summer and with long tracts of deep sand to be waded through, required five days to accomplish; the first of which was sufficient to give the pedestrians an appearance so dusty and travel-stained that, as Father Salvado says, they might have been mistaken for the savages whom they were hoping to convert. The party reached Captain Scully's house in safety, and having remained there three days to recruit both men and oxen, they again went forward, in a northerly direction, under the guidance of his two servants.

The heat was most intense, and during their last day's journey it was aggravated by a total absence of water

upon the road, so that it was with no slight joy that, on the evening of the 27th of February, they came in sight of the desired spot, when the whole party rushed to the spring which they had been led to expect there, the four oxen competing with the men which should reach it first. But it proved little better than a mud hole, and so nauseous as to produce vomiting; neither did the digging of a ditch at the side of it at all mend matters. The servants wanted to go back, but the missionaries refused to do so as a native whom they accidentally met had promised to point out another spring in the morning.

At early dawn, therefore, Father Salvado, and the good savage, accompanied by the novice and one of the servants, set out in quest of the hoped-for water: but after walking five miles they came upon a hole as dry as the first, at sight of which the guide struck the ground with a gesture of disappointed amazement. However, he made signs that there was yet another chance if the party would go still farther. The novice and the servant lost heart and refused to proceed, but Father Salvado still followed the native, and at the end of another mile they had the indescribable joy of reaching a large pond, whence, after drinking their fill, they hastened back with brimming pitchers to their companions, the native uttering loud cries of *coo-ee*, as he went along, to announce the news of his success.

Towards dusk the whole party encamped beside the water, and on the following morning, being the fourth Sunday in Lent and the 1st of March, the two servants unloaded the cart, and returned to Captain Scully's after the celebration of mass, leaving the four missionaries in the heart of the bush. Next day they set to work, digging

foundations and cutting wood, in preparation for the erection of a hut of sufficient size to serve the double purpose of dwelling-place and chapel. In the evening a good many natives appeared, looking not timid but suspicious; they came up to the water's edge about forty paces from the builders, and after lighting a large fire lay down to sleep. "We also," says Father Salvado, "lighted our fire when we could no longer see to work, and, standing round it, chanted compline with as much solemnity as on our days of festival at home, but the remembrance that we had such wild neighbours close around us made sleep an impossibility."

About two hours after sunrise the natives moved off, and the building went on briskly, but towards evening they returned in greater numbers and completely armed. They lighted their fire a few paces nearer to the missionaries than on the preceding evening, and the latter passed a night of extreme anxiety, expecting every moment to be killed and eaten. Morning, however, brought a little tranquillity, for the unwelcome visitors again disappeared, and the hut made such progress that by midday, when the workmen sat down to dinner, there was nothing wanting but the roof. At this moment they saw a crowd of natives coming up, contrary to their usual custom of not returning till evening, each man carrying six or seven spears; "we looked at them," continues my author, "with cheerful countenances, God alone knowing the beating of our hearts, and made signs of invitation to share our tea and bread," but without paying any attention to this offered hospitality, the natives sat down beside the pond talking eagerly amongst themselves.

Death itself being preferable to this prolonged state of uncertainty the missionaries set their wits to work to devise a scheme for ending it one way or other, and eventually hit on an idea which was somewhat after the fashion of throwing a sop to Cerberus. They determined upon baking three or four huge dampers, and carrying them boldly, with several plates piled up with sugar, as a peace-offering to the company beside the pond; and to show that no treachery was intended the bearers of the feast filled their own mouths with fragments of the dampers, and chewed in a very demonstrative manner as the procession moved along.

The natives perhaps thought it would be *infra dig.* to seem too easily mollified, for, at sight of the approaching collation, the men snatched up their spears and the women and children ran away howling dismally. However, the missionaries without any symptoms of fear continued to advance, with a great parade of eating heartily, and making signs that the dampers should be accepted, and the weapons laid aside. A few of the natives complied, and the Benedictines, much encouraged, offered sugar to some little ones who had not joined the others in running away, but had remained clinging tightly to their father's legs and crying as if frightened out of their senses. At the first taste of the sugar the children spat it out suspiciously, but on a second trial nodded approval and persuaded the others to eat of it likewise. In a few seconds both sugar and dampers disappeared, and a general scramble was going on for the crumbs. The missionaries made holiday for the remainder of that day, being accompanied back to their hut by some of the natives, in whom

the sight of the implements of husbandry created great astonishment.

The next morning so many savages crowded to see the Fathers at their work that they asked their visitors for a helping hand, which they not only willingly gave, but also pointed out the best materials for the roof and where to obtain them in the greatest plenty, by means of which assistance and information the whole building was soon covered in. At dinner-time the working party all sat down together, and the obliging visitors were helped to the largest share of what was cooked. "What might not then have been the success of our Mission," says Father Salvado, "if we had been better supplied with provisions? A hundred persons, who had offered to remain with us and help us, withdrew into the woods, because we had not bread to give them."

The missionaries had gained a great point, however, in establishing a friendly feeling between themselves and the natives, and they followed up their advantage by roaming as much as possible about the bush with them, sharing their occupations, and often carrying the children who soon affected the company of the Benedictines more than that of their own parents.

Cheerfully as things seemed to be going on, however, difficulties were looming ahead, for, although little more than two months had elapsed since Father Salvado and his three brother missionaries had left Perth, the provisions which they brought with them were almost entirely consumed. The number of mouths at the Mission had also been increased by the arrival of the English Benedictine, and it was therefore judged expedient that one of the

company should repair to Perth, to acquaint their bishop with their necessitous condition. Father Salvado accordingly set out upon the journey, accompanied as far as Captain Scully's house by a native: the wayfarers subsisting as they went along on such food as the bush could afford; whether this consisted of opossums, or grubs, or lizards, which last when roasted are described as "dainty morsels," "I must acknowledge, for the honour of the truth," says the Father, "that the good savage always gave me the larger half."

The grubs to which allusion is made much resemble, if they are not identical with, the *groo groo* grub of the West Indies, and are found in "blackboy" trees by the natives and other knowing persons, who pronounce the flavour to be almost equal to that of beef marrow. I never saw but one of these creatures; it was white, of the thickness of a finger and about as long, and I fully believe Father Salvado's statement, that his stomach "writhed" over the swallowing of them. Whilst we lived in Barladong, we saw two or three moths which were quite as large as common English bats, but whether or no they were of the kind into which these grubs turn we had no means of ascertaining.

Arrived at Captain Scully's the Father was presented with supplies which rendered him independent of grubs for the remainder of his road; nevertheless his friendly native here turned back lest his wife, as he said, should be stolen in his absence. A truer reason would perhaps have been that he dreaded being killed by natives to whom he was unknown; for as game is the only means of subsistence in the bush it is jealously preserved, and

strangers are regarded as poachers whom it is right and proper to spear at once.

On reaching Perth Father Salvado made known the destitution of the Mission to his bishop, warning him that unless help could be speedily sent its members must all die of hunger. This was grievous news to Dr. Brady, who had no means of relieving the distress, nor even of providing with shoes the almost barefooted messenger; he had in fact nothing to offer but the suggestion that the party should immediately return to Perth, where he promised that at all events they should not want bread; but Father Salvado replied by imploring that neither he nor his brothers should be compelled to yield obedience to such a mandate, as they had all determined, with the help of God, to suffer any privation rather than abandon their poor savages. Upon this the bishop resolved to urge the claims of the Mission upon his flock in a sermon, while Father Salvado should ask alms at the church door, which the latter did once or twice and thus obtained a little money. But the Catholics were few and their means limited, and he began to think that he must adopt the humiliating alternative of going round to beg help from the richer Protestants, when it suddenly occurred to him that he might, perhaps, be able to raise funds by giving a concert on the pianoforte. In this project few persons could be better qualified than himself to succeed; and it was no sooner known that the Governor had granted to him the use of the Court-house for a musical entertainment, than individuals of all sects and denominations vied with each other in promoting its success.

More than one piano was placed at his disposal,—the

Protestant printer engaged to issue the programmes gratis, —the Anglican clergyman lent the church candlesticks,— his clerk volunteered to attend to the lights,—a Jewish gentleman distributed the tickets of admission,—in fact the whole story reads like a parallel to the story in 'Evenings at Home,' written to prove the assertion that there are points on which all men can agree. One is reminded of the Churchman lying on the pavement in a fit, and of the good Quaker lady holding her smelling-bottle to his nose, whilst a Roman Catholic runs for a doctor, and a Baptist takes care of the children.

By the time that the appointed evening arrived all accessories had been provided, excepting, indeed, new clothes for the poor performer. Some amount of magnanimity was certainly required to face a well-dressed audience in the plight to which he was reduced. His frock hung from his knees in rags and tatters,—his black breeches were patched in different colours. "My stockings," he says, "thanks to my own care, cut a tolerable figure; but of my shoes, which were good when I left Italy, little more remained than the upper leathers." Add to this, that his hands and face were tanned to the colour of a native; but his "more than three months' beard," which was then supposed to aid in the general disfigurement, would now excite no observation, beards being not only of almost universal adoption, but specially worn by the Benedictine monks of New Norcia since they found that the natives respected them the more for not shaving. "In fact," he says, "my appearance excited both laughter and compassion." Neither could the applause which accompanied his endeavours to please the audience banish,

as he says, from his mind's eye "the picture of my four poor brothers, dying of hunger in the bush."

With the proceeds of the concert he was enabled not only to purchase provisions of all kinds, but also a yoke of oxen for ploughing—a grand safeguard against future want. The help, however, arrived too late for all to share in it. Before he could reach the Mission the poor young catechist was dead, and the mind of the French novice was so much shaken that it was judged best to send him back to Perth under the escort of a kind-hearted Frenchman who had accompanied Father Salvado on his return journey to lend his assistance in the toil of clearing the land. The two monks were thus left to carry on the work as best they could, which proved such a sore task (in every sense of the word) to barefooted men, that they now contrived for themselves wooden shoes covered with fur. They also patched their ragged monastic habits with the same material, and supplied lost buttons by strings made of the sinews of the kangaroo.

The wheat began to sprout in September, but the old saying held good, that "while the grass grows the steed starves"; and for twenty-nine days in October the Fathers never tasted bread. This state of want was relieved by the arrival of two natives with a present of fourteen pounds of flour, sent by a poor Irish servant at Captain Scully's whom the natives had acquainted with the poverty at the Mission, and whose name of "Elinor" is gratefully recorded by Father Salvado. To the two good fellows who carried her gift thanks were also due, but in a less degree, as whenever the missionaries had bread they always shared it freely with the natives.

In addition to field labour, and the acquisition of the native language, which, says Father Salvado, "we were learning with all our might," he and his colleague were endeavouring, with no less energy, to obtain an insight into the laws, customs, and superstitions of the savages, hoping to be thus able to suppress their frequent fights. When this task was impossible, the Benedictine hut became a hospital to which the wounded were carried; and though Father Salvado says of himself and his brother Serra that the one knew as much of doctoring as the other—"which was nothing"—yet the cures which the two brought about, notwithstanding this want of knowledge, were the means of gaining for the amateur surgeons a degree of affectionate confidence from the patients which probably could have been secured by no other circumstance.

The happiest moment for conveying instruction to these wild children of nature was at night, when a ring of listeners sat round the fire, and story-telling followed the evening meal. At such times Father Salvado would be often called upon to contribute his share to the entertainment, and would be interrogated concerning the customs of his country, the names of his parents (his mother especially), those of his brothers, and what were his reasons for having quitted his relations. A description of European customs never failed to elicit loud and hearty peals of laughter; but when he proceeded to relate the motives which had induced him to leave his home and kindred the audience listened with eyes fixed and breath suspended. "I did my best," he adds, "to take advantage of these moments that I might gain them for the Lord's service,

and I often perceived that greater benefit accrued from this mode of instruction than could have been produced by the most eloquent sermons."

On the point, however, of their secret superstitions, the natives maintained a reserve which he found almost impenetrable. Questions addressed on these subjects to the older men were turned off with a joke, or with a feint of not understanding their meaning, and natives of some thirty years of age would parry the inquiry by saying that they were too young to give an account of such matters. This experience of Father Salvado concerning the unwillingness of the natives to speak of their own superstitious beliefs might possibly explain an incident which caused us some perplexity. Two or three natives, at different times, gave us obscure scraps of information relative to a yearly feast held in honour of the evil spirit, and called on that account the "Jingy corobbery," but, with the exception of one colonist who was familiar with it, none of the white persons to whom we mentioned the feast would believe that it had any existence. They had lived in the colony all their lives, they said, and in constant intercourse with the natives, yet had heard of no such "corobbery," and, not unnaturally, they considered that our native friends had imposed upon us. We thought, however, that their description of the "Jingy" feast bore so much resemblance to what we had read of aboriginal customs on the eastern side of Australia that, though we did not attempt to set up our own short experience against that of older residents, we saw no reason for renouncing our private opinion that the "Jingy corobbery" was a fact. But to return to the thread of my narrative.

Whilst the two monks were thus diligently studying the language and customs of the natives their own opinions as to the best means of converting savages to Christianity were rapidly undergoing a change. Hitherto the missionaries had supposed that this object could be attained only by their following the tribe in all its wanderings, but their increasing experience now showed them that they had been mistaken, and that nomadic habits on the part of the teachers were not calculated to reclaim a race of nomads. "Nothing so easy," says Father Salvado, "as to preach a sermon to a savage; but if in the middle of it he asks for something to eat, he will, unless the preacher is able to supply the want, cut short the discourse altogether by going off to look for food in the bush."

The eagerness also with which the natives would work in return for bread added not a little to the poignancy with which the missionaries viewed their deficient means. One thing was also certain, that no religious teaching which was not combined with instruction in agriculture could be of use in a country so naturally destitute of food for man's use that, if a native cannot find game, contingencies may, and do, occur as horrible as any which are furnished by our most dismal annals of shipwreck.

A native named Billiagoro, with whom Father Salvado became intimate, told him of four families having once been reduced by sheer famine to kill and eat a child, the narrator himself having taken part in the revolting meal. There had been six successive days of heavy rain, accompanied by unusual cold, and all attempts to procure food during that time had proved unsuccessful. The victim was Billiagoro's own sister, "and had I been older, I would

have defended her" he said, "but then the lot would have only been shifted to some other yet more unprotected child, for we were all dying of hunger, and eat we must."

The practice also, which Father Salvado found in vogue in native families, of killing the third daughter at her birth had its origin, no doubt, in the scarcity of the means of subsistence, since in no other manner can such cruelty be accounted for, amongst a people so fond of their children as the West Australian natives. Neither had custom entirely robbed the deed of its horrors, although the murder was always perpetrated by the mother herself. So strangely did philanthropy and barbarity run hand in hand that, if other women were present at the birth, it not unfrequently happened that one of them, rather than consent to the infanticide, would herself adopt the child and bring it up; and Father Salvado says that he was personally acquainted with more than one of these good foster-mothers and the nurslings whose lives they had saved.

The monks judged that the first remedy to be applied to the evils of murder and cannibalism was the tilling of the ground, and they accordingly waited on their bishop, imploring him to build and found a monastery, around which might be gathered a native population which the Fathers would undertake to instruct personally in field labour. "The object that we had at heart," continues our author, "was the establishing of a village of native proprietors, who should be husbandmen and artisans as well as real Christians."

This was a scheme to which it was easier to obtain the bishop's consent than to discover how the necessary funds

for carrying it out could be provided. Even the suggestion that one of the party should repair to Europe, on a begging expedition, was impracticable for want of money to pay his passage thither, and Father Salvado could devise no other means of surmounting the difficulty than that of proposing to open a music school in Perth, fraught with the bold condition that all who enrolled themselves as his scholars must pay him a year's teaching in advance.

Offers of pupils flowed in notwithstanding such an unusual form of advertisement, but the project of the music school was rendered unnecessary by the opportune arrival of a remittance to the bishop from the "Propaganda," with a promise of future help. A large part of this timely succour, namely five thousand francs, was devoted to the establishment of the monastery, and, all difficulties being now removed, the foundation stone, with a medal of St. Benedict beneath it, was laid upon the 1st of March, 1847, the Mission thenceforward receiving the name of New Norcia in honour of the "patriarch's" birth-place. The chapel was dedicated to the Holy Trinity.

No money was expended on masons' or carpenters' wages, the builders being all volunteers from Perth, who were kept well supplied with meat by a kangaroo dog under the charge of a native whilst the work lasted. Pompey lived to see the day, though with only one eye left him, when the Benedictines owned a flock of sheep, and needed not his services in hunting down kangaroo for their guests. He did not seem to take in good part this complete deposition from office, and sometimes asserted himself by killing a sheep, which the monks, on issuing from their monastery at early dawn to labour in the fields,

would find, to their chagrin, laid outside the door by him in orderly fashion and untouched.

The Governor's original grant of twenty acres being insufficient to support the number of savages who had already joined the Benedictines, the monks petitioned for thirty acres in addition, which were not only granted in freehold, but they were also allowed the use of a run of one thousand acres for pasturing their sheep and herds. In the winter immediately following this concession Father Salvado parcelled out allotments and gave seed-corn to those natives who had helped him in the previous harvest, and it was not a little pleasant to see the eagerness with which the boon was accepted, the ground cultivated, and bird-scaring carried on by the same men who, but a year before, had laughed at him as mad for throwing corn into the ground.

Observing that they were not only delighted to possess something of their own, but that, like other human beings, they worked in proportion to the recompense which they received, his next step was to make them a payment in money for all piece-work done for the monastery. This did no good at first as they either lost their money or gave it away; he therefore explained to them that by saving it up they would be able, in course of time, to send to Perth for new clothes, or to purchase a pig, a cow, or even a horse. The result was that the native labourers were content at the end of each week to leave their pay in his hands, when the money was placed in a chest fitted with divisions, and the name of each depositor written over the special compartment that belonged to him.

It was a great delight to each workman, when Saturday came, to turn the money over in his hands speculating on

what he would buy, before dropping it into the chest; nor did the benefit stop here, for, if a native idled over his work, the reminding him of pay-day was quite enough to rouse him to exertion. The adage too seemed verified of "things mending when they come to their worst," for Billiagoro of cannibal experience was the first native at the Mission who commenced cattle-keeping on his own account, having became possessor of a heifer calf which, by the way, he named after himself.

On no point does Father Salvado insist so strenuously as on the folly of saying that the Australian native cannot appreciate the value of money or property: "he acquires a just idea of both in a short time, and diligently studies, thenceforth, how he may better his condition; but if he is only made to feel the burdens of civilization without its advantages, (the wages paid him being so insignificant as to disgust him with labour,) he prefers the freedom of a wild life, and returns to the bush."

Father Salvado also quotes from a report of a commission which sat at Sydney in consequence of Lord Stanley's desire that a plan should be devised for ameliorating the condition of the aborigines; on that occasion a missionary who had been asked for a suggestion replied that he knew not how to make one, so many schemes having already been tried without success: although the question "had the natives ever been paid in money for their work?" had received an answer in the negative. "It would therefore appear," says the Father, "that though no fresh system could be proposed, there had not, as yet, been any trial made of what might be effected with the natives by the motive of self-interest."

And now having brought the Spanish missionaries to that point when they could "eat the labour of their hands," I must close a sketch which might have been embellished by other extracts, and additional anecdotes, had I not feared to violate the rights of authors and the laws of courtesy. I have simply tried to give the salient points of the narrative, especially those which relate to the natural disposition of the natives and their capacity for improvement.

The chief obstacles to success at New Norcia have arisen, as may easily be imagined, at the first, from the character of many of the shepherds and servants of the settlers in the earlier time of the Mission, and latterly, from the conversion of the colony into a penal settlement. The Fathers have found themselves compelled to maintain an isolated position by extending their purchases of land, and thus drawing, so to speak, a *cordon sanitaire* around their converts. Even if Western Australia had never been made a penal colony, the success of the Mission would probably have owed much to such restrictions on its admixture with white society. Children and young plants thrive best in nurseries, and I do not believe that under any circumstances a wild race can be educated with justice to itself on the open ground of civilization. The intermarriage of the converts, and the settling of the young couples upon a tract belonging to the monastery, has been one most important result of the position which the Benedictines occupy as members of a large landed institution.

So many marriages between girls just past childhood and men of middle age take place among the wild natives, that the better assorted matches of New Norcia are not

lost upon the aboriginal female mind; and I found that the chance of a young native husband was regarded by the native girls as forming a special contingent advantage of being brought up at "the Mission." Moreover, in the process of rescuing a race from utter barbarism a species of feudalism, which will provide protectors and instructors, seems an indispensable ingredient, and, if the reclaimed native is to stick to industrious habits, and to live on his own allotment, it must be by his remaining beneath the protecting eyes of those who have lifted him from his original position, and whose benevolent supervision alone will prevent his sinking back to it.

There is no doubt also that the fact of the Benedictines being fellow-workers with the natives not only as their instructors but as their personal companions, and, as I may say, brother journeymen in all useful arts and occupations, such as shoe-making, building, harvesting, and shepherding, has much helped in persuading traditional hunters to adopt the life of orderly peasants: for it must be remembered that the natives were the lords of their own country until the arrival of its English masters, and that though they have now lost their heritage of land they still retain that of pride: no eye so quick as theirs to recognize the deference that is paid by white people to all those whose circumstances exempt them from the necessity of manual labour, and the native, not unnaturally, thinks that the less work he does the more he resembles a gentleman.

Even with regard to a knowledge of the native language, I was assured that to speak it badly gained more respect for oneself from the natives than to speak it well, as the

latter fact implied a long residence in the colony involving much experience of rough living and hard work, and, as they suppose, giving proof of a want of wealth and personal position,—crude ideas of which a counterpart may be often seen amongst so-called civilized persons, and which justify the correctness of the Benedictines' plan of keeping their pupils, as much as possible, within the recesses of the bush.

The Mission of New Norcia, from a beginning so small and beset with so much hardship, has now assumed the character of one of the most flourishing settlements in the colony of Western Australia, and is respected for its success, even by those who are least friendly to its religion. The village of native Christians which the monks hoped to establish, has now really sprung into existence, and the captain of the ship in which we returned to England, in 1869, told us that of the wool which composed his cargo none was better packed than that which came from New Norcia, which had been cleaned and put into bales by native hands.

According to the census for the year 1870 the native population of New Norcia consisted of eighteen male and sixteen female adults, many of whom are married and established in their own homes; and (of children) sixteen boys and ten girls under instruction at the Mission.

There is yet one story that I must tell, as it is too good to pass, of how Father Salvado drank tea in the bush with Billiagoro on occasion of their going out together to look for a new sheep-run. On the evening of a terribly hot day master and man, before camping for the night, started in different directions in search of water for the teapot,

and the master returning quite baffled, describes himself as much cheered by the perfume of a sandalwood fire announcing from a distance that the tea is in progress, which he not only finds to be the case on nearer approach, but that his servitor is already rolling out a damper.

"Bravo, good fellow; where did you find the water?" but Billiagoro says never a word, and continues to bake his cake in silence. Just before lying down to sleep, Father Salvado reminds him that he had better go back to the well and bring water enough for breakfast, so as to save time in the morning. "The well!" said Billiagoro, now ready enough to speak; "there is not a drop left in it." "No water left in it?" replied Father Salvado; "what can you mean?" "Not a single drop," said Billiagoro; "all I could find was in a hole in a stone, and I had to suck up what there was of it by a mouthful at a time to fill the pannikin." "My good fellow!" expostulated the master; "why not tell me so before?" "Where would have been the good of my doing that?" was the servant's answer; "you would have drunk nothing then; now you have had your tea, and eaten the damper."

In the same manner as Dogberry follows his "sixth and lastly," with "to conclude," I add another story of a different kind, referring to an experience of too much water rather than the want of it. A poor little native orphan of six years old having taken refuge in a half-starved condition at the monastery, the monks decided on handing her over to the care of the nuns at Perth, and with this view Father Salvado set out to convey her thither in the ox wagon. The winter of 1847 being ex-

traordinarily wet the rivers were in an unusual state of flood, and in crossing the Avon the strength of the current overturned the wagon, Father Salvado saving himself and the child by swimming. On looking back he saw that the oxen were drowning in consequence of their harness being entangled in the branches of a tree; he therefore swam to it, and with much trouble set the poor things at liberty. They forthwith, excusing themselves from continuing the journey, got out of the river on the side that was nearest home, whilst the Father proceeded to Perth on foot, carrying the child on his shoulders through two days' march. Some months afterwards Father Salvado, being again at Perth and sitting in the sacristy preparing for mass, at which he was to officiate, found himself suddenly seized round the neck by his little travelling companion, who, laying her head on his breast, burst into a fit of weeping. As she continued to shed tears for more than five minutes without once raising her head or speaking a word, "I asked her," he says, "with some anxiety, whether she was unhappy with the good sisters, or disliked her new mode of life, and each of my questions being answered with the assurance that she was quite contented, 'Then what are you crying for?' I said; 'is there anything that you wish me to do for you?' 'Nothing else,' she answered, 'but to let me stay with you for a few minutes.' All those," he continues, "who were present at this meeting between myself and the poor little girl were affected to tears by the sight of her affectionate behaviour, and I thought myself well repaid for the two days that I had carried her on my shoulders."

CHAPTER XIII.

Names upon shore-line of West Australia in three different languages — Legend of Great Java — Spanish admiral invents name of Australia — Pioneers of West Australia exclusively Dutch — Discovery of Swan River — Finding of inscription on Dirk Hartog's Island — Dampier's shark — M. de Bougainville — Reasons of Admiral D'Entrecasteaux's voyage being undertaken — Captain Baudin's ideas about names — Tale invented by colonial John Bull — Naturalists lose their way — Captain Baudin's inhumanity — Pewter plate carried to Paris — Captain Stirling sails to Swan River — His favourable reports of it — Cockburn Sound — Garden Island — Plans for colonization — No convicts to be admitted — Large grants of land — Deplorable condition of first immigrants — Scurvy — Early cutting of cabbages — Governor Stirling's activity — Unsuitability of goods and furniture — Travelling carriages turned to good account — Deal packing-cases found useful — Harp re-shipped — Tents blow loose in windy weather — Boys fasten ropes — Vessel on sand-bank — Boat capsized — Merits of twins not recognized by Colonial Government — Australind projected — Repetition of disappointment — Western Australia acquires a bad name — Discovery of mineral districts.

ANYONE who looks at a map of Western Australia cannot fail to observe that the names upon its shore-line belong to three different languages. French, Dutch, and English names occur amongst the appellations of its capes, bays, and headlands, and, like the bricks in the chimney built by Jack Cade's father, "testify" to the nationality of the adventurous seamen who at distant intervals surveyed the coast. There seems, however, to be a probability that the existence of Australia was first surmised by the Portuguese, who established colonies in India and the Spice Islands at a very early period, and a story goes that one John Rotz, of the Portuguese service, dedicated a hydro-

graphic map to the king of England in 1542, wherein a portion of the austral continent was delineated under the name of Great Java. Whatever foundation there may be for this anecdote, it is nevertheless certain that Australia virtually remained an unknown and mysterious territory until the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Dutch and Spaniards began to press hard on each other's heels in the task of unveiling it, and the latter not only carried off the chief honours of discovery, but also published the earliest accounts of the "great south land" which can be considered authentic.

The name itself of Australia, which Flinders suggested should be applied collectively to the whole of the continent, was first invented by the Spanish admiral Quirós as the designation of that part of it which he discovered in the year 1608. The earliest pioneers of Western Australia, however, seem to have been exclusively Dutch, for its entire seaboard is in old maps parcelled out into separate "lands," each of which bears the name of a Dutchman or of his ship. Tasman's Land, De Witt's Land, Endracht's Land, Edel's Land, the Land of Lyons (or Leeuwin), and Nuyt's Land encircled what is now called Western Australia in a connected chain from its northern boundary to its extreme south-east limit, each link having had a geographical existence before the middle of the seventeenth century whilst as yet people made voyages of discovery without chronometers, and in vessels that were sometimes not many sizes bigger than a modern coastguard cutter.

The river Swan became known to Europeans under the auspices of a Dutch commander, named William Vlaming,

who, when cruising off Edel's Land, discovered, upon the 3rd of January 1697, the mouth of a stream much frequented by black swans, and an adjacent island that swarmed with kangaroo rats. Vlaming bestowed upon the island the appropriate name of Rottnest, or the "rat's nest," and christened the stream the Black Swan River, but the river has long since moulted the first portion of the adjective, and the birds that once haunted its waters have also much withdrawn themselves from observation.

Proceeding northwards, and coasting along Endracht's Land, Vlaming landed upon an island called after Dirk Hartog, at the entrance of Shark's Bay, and had the good hap to find a written memorial which Dirk Hartog himself had left there eighty-one years previously. A pewter plate nailed to a tree bore an inscription to the effect that the ship 'Endracht,' of Amsterdam, had arrived at that island on the 25th of October, 1616: Captain Dirk Hartog: and that she had sailed two days afterwards for Bantam. Vlaming replaced the pewter document after appending a second inscription, recording his own arrival at that spot in the ship 'Geelvink,' on the 4th of February, 1697, and he is also said to have deposited similar memorials of his progress along the coast at different places on the mainland; but unfortunately none of them have ever yet come to light.

By the early part of the eighteenth century Dutch curiosity seems to have been lulled concerning New Holland, (as the States-General had decreed in 1665 that their discoveries in Australia should be henceforth collectively called,) or satisfied that it offered little to reward further investigation. No Dutch settlement crowned the

patient labour which the maritime sons of Holland had spent in exploring the Australian coast, nor do they ever seem to have reaped any advantage from the discovery of it. A few mutineers were set ashore in the year 1629, by one Francis Pelsart, in what would be now called the district of Champion Bay, but nothing was ever known of their subsequent fate.

The time was approaching for the introduction of French and English names on the coast-line of West Australia, and as far as I can ascertain the first English name that ever appeared there was that of Dampier, the whilom buccaneer, who was deputed by the British Government to conduct a voyage of discovery to the South Seas in the reign of William III., and who gave his own name to a cluster of little islands, called Dampier's Archipelago, that stud the coast near the sheep-farming settlement of Nichol Bay.

Shark's Bay, which lies considerably to the south of Dampier's Archipelago, does not appear to have received its descriptive name without good reason. In this bay Dampier makes mention of having caught a shark that measured eleven feet in length "with a maw like a leather sack, very thick, and so tough that a sharp knife could scarce cut it." Nor was the sack empty, and its contents, if Dampier was not mistaken in them, proved that the shark hailed from a distant port, and had wisely taken plenty of victuals on board before commencing a long voyage. The provender consisted of "the head and bones of a hippopotamus, the hairy lips of which were still sound,"—"the jaw was also firm, out of which we plucked a great many teeth, two of them eight inches long, and

as big as a man's thumb." Dampier's roaming life must have furnished him with opportunity, one would think, of knowing a hippopotamus when he saw one, but it is difficult to imagine that he judged correctly in this instance, as the hippopotamus is nowhere to be found on the scantily-watered continent of Australia. But it must not be supposed that the marine productions of Shark's Bay are confined to the hideous fish from which it takes its name, conchologists being indebted to it for very beautiful shells which are gathered on the beach.

No Frenchman came to reconnoitre West Australia until the early part of George the Third's reign, when there appeared one of great note, no less a personage than M. de Bougainville, who had rendered important assistance to the Marquis de Montcalm in defending Canada against the English, and whose intention to have supplied the garrison of Quebec with provisions, on the night that Wolfe ascended the heights of Abraham, ran within a hair's breadth of frustrating that exploit, and had nearly deprived England of one of her brightest historical pages. M. de Bougainville subsequently exchanged a soldier's life for a sailor's, and signalized himself as the first Frenchman who ever made a voyage round the world. Cape Bougainville and Cape Voltaire are two long narrow-necked promontories on either side of Admiralty Gulf in the north of West Australia—a part which at present is only resorted to by pearl-fishers.

The next visit that Western Australia received from the French was remarkable on two accounts, being due not only to one of the last acts which the unfortunate

Louis the Sixteenth exercised as a sovereign, but also to the unusual circumstance of a resolution passed by the National Assembly with a humane purpose for its object. The painful uncertainty which had been felt in France concerning the fate of M. de la Pérouse and his ships 'La Boussole' and 'L'Astrolabe,' induced the National Assembly to request that the king should order his ministers and consuls, residing in different countries, to set on foot all possible inquiries with a view of ascertaining whether that commander, or any of his men, might yet be living, as shipwrecked mariners, on some distant island of the South Seas. It was also suggested that the king should offer suitable rewards to all navigators, of any nation whatsoever, who should procure tidings of the fate of M. de la Pérouse, and that two French ships should be fitted out with the double purpose of searching for the missing crews, and of extending scientific and geographical knowledge. Accordingly the frigates 'La Recherche' and 'L'Espérance' were equipped at Brest, and the Admiral D'Entrecasteaux received the command of the expédition which, in the words of the poor king,* "*présentait une occasion de perfectionner la description du globe, et d'accroître les connaissances humaines.*"

The admiral failed in bringing to light the fate of M. de la Pérouse, but his geographical surveyor, M. Beautems Beaupré, made such an accurate chart of Western Australia from Cape Leeuwin as far as 132° east of Greenwich, that Flinders, in speaking of it, says that the advantages to geography from his own subsequent survey of

* 'Voyage de D'Entrecasteaux envoyé à la Recherche de la Pérouse.' Rédigé par M. de Rossel. Paris, 1808.

that portion of the coast, "would consist, not in correcting what M. Beautems Beaupré had laid down, but in confirming and adding to the information before obtained."

The south-west headland of Western Australia, and a bay in the south of the colony, are respectively called Espérance Bay and Point D'Entrecasteaux; King George's Sound, which lies between the two, had been discovered by Vancouver about a year before the French admiral's visit.

Bishop Salvado supposes that Admiral D'Entrecasteaux had perhaps intended to have secured this part of Australia as a French possession; but, however that may have been, he did not live to carry back any account of it, and the expedition which he conducted may itself be said to have made no return voyage. The news of the massacre of Louis the Sixteenth and of the overturn of the French monarchy reached the crews of 'La Recherche' and 'L'Espérance' at a Dutch settlement in Java, subsequently to the death of their admiral, whereupon officers and men divided themselves into republican and royalist parties, the frigates were dismantled, and the voyage was declared to be at an end.*

The French still continued, however, to buzz like bees about the shore-line of West Australia, and a perfect shower of Gallic appellations fell upon it during the voy-

* M. de Rossel, the officer who succeeded to the command of the expedition after the death of Admiral D'Entrecasteaux, endeavoured to reach Europe in a Dutch East Indiaman, which was captured on the north of Scotland by an English frigate. Lord Spencer offered M. de Rossel employment in the Hydrographical Department of the Admiralty, where he continued until the passing of the decree which allowed the return of emigrants to France. On leaving England, M. de Rossel was permitted to carry with him copies of all the journals, charts, and observations which he had had in his possession when taken prisoner.

ages of two corvettes, 'Le Géographe' and 'Le Naturaliste,' which sailed from France in 1800 under command of Captain Baudin. A previous application had been made to Mr. Pitt for the necessary passports,* "*pour mettre le Capitaine Baudin à l'abri de toute attaque hostile, et lui procurer une réception favorable dans les établissemens Britanniques où il pourra être obligé de relâcher momentanément,*" for in those days of war between France and England peaceful navigators of either country required letters of safe-conduct to protect them from hard usage in case of meeting their angry neighbours on the high seas, and to enable them to take refuge in each other's ports without risk of imprisonment.

The avowed object of Captain Baudin's expedition, when applying for the passports, was "to sail round the world for the furtherance of scientific research"; but he ended by merely circumnavigating Australia, and there can be no doubt that the real purpose of the voyage was that of *espionnage* alone.

The prior discoveries of Flinders were appropriated by Captain Baudin without any scruple, and the two gulfs in South Australia, which had been named by the former Spencer and St. Vincent, were paraded in charts (published in Paris as the fruits of French enterprise) under the names of Golfe Bonaparte and Golfe Joséphine. In fact the French captain seems to have been under the impression that a navigator's first duty lay in the invention of a fresh set of names for other people's discoveries, and, amongst a host of similar performances, the name of North West Cape, otherwise Vlaming Head, in West Australia, was

* 'Voyage de Découvertes aux Terres Australes.' Paris, 1805.

altered to that of Cape Murat, as a change for the better. However, as might have been expected, the new names soon fell away from the old localities, though wherever the coast of Swan River had not been previously explored it retains Captain Baudin's nomenclature to this day.

The bay on which the little town of Busselton is situated and its promontory are still called Géographe Bay and Cape Naturaliste, whilst Port Leschenault, near Bunbury, and Cape Péron, south of Perth, perpetuate the memory of two *savans* who accompanied the expedition. Cape Hamelin enshrines the name of the commander of the 'Naturaliste,' whose observation that the pearl-oyster flourishes on part of the West Australian coast in great quantities is now confirmed by the daily experience of many who make a livelihood in fishing for it.

Captain Hamelin also made an examination of the river of Black Swans, and was, perhaps, the mythical Frenchman of whom the settlers were fond of repeating a story that he had anchored at night, and had sailed away before day-break in a panic caused by the croaking of the frogs in an adjacent swamp. The colonial John Bull was evidently at a loss for a laugh against his old enemy when he invented this *canard*, for otherwise he would surely have represented the French commander as having been cheered beyond measure by sounds which conveyed to himself and his crew an abundant promise of their favourite food.

M. Péron relates in his journal that he and two brother naturalists lost their way on one occasion when they landed for the purpose of searching for curiosities, and his description of what they endured from heat and thirst, and from the scorching sand, will be appreciated by all who are

acquainted with West Australia, and with the narratives of those who have been similarly situated. The sight of some natives at a distance, of whom M. Péron and his friends wished to obtain a nearer view, had induced them to stray farther than they were at first aware of, and when they had succeeded with much difficulty in finding their way back to the sea, they perceived that their wanderings had placed a weary stretch of shore between themselves and their boat.

In order to make sure of not missing the way a second time the party determined to follow the windings of the beach, along which they toiled, laden with plants and shells, sometimes wading through the sea to avoid the reflected glare of the sun upon the white sand, and obliged at last to abandon a great part of the precious freight which they had procured at the expense of so much toil and danger, from sheer inability to carry the burden any farther.

By the time that the naturalists reached the boat, the sailors in charge of it had consumed the small supply of food and fresh water that they had brought with them, and the night was too much advanced to admit of an immediate return to the ship. On the morrow a thick fog increased the delay, none of the party, strange to say, being provided with a compass; and the poor curiosity-hunters had endured a fast of forty-four hours when they once again stepped on board 'Le Géographe,' in a state more dead than alive. M. Péron adds that Captain Baudin not only inexorably fined the officer of the boat in ten francs for each of the three guns fired the preceding evening as a signal for him to return, but also upbraided

him for not having left the three unfortunate *savans* to their fate.

Before finally quitting Western Australia Captain Baudin touched at Dirk Hartog's Island, and found the ancient log half buried in the sand with the two inscriptions still legible, in spite of the hundred and eighty-six years which had passed since the writing of the first, and the hundred and five since the addition of the second. Perhaps the French captain thought that the non-destructive character of the climate had been sufficiently tested, for he bore away the interesting relic, and it is said to be now preserved at Paris. The northern point of Dirk Hartog's Island is still called Cape Inscription, though the object is removed that conferred the name upon it.

Between the years 1818 and 1822 Captain King examined the northern coast of Australia, accompanied by the naturalist Mr. Cunningham, both of whose names are preserved in West Australia in King Sound and Cunningham Point.

Bishop Salvado describes Captain King's survey as "a model of patience and precision," but he did not proceed southward, or make any investigation of Swan River proper, imagining that the French had already exhausted that subject. Many people, on the contrary, were of opinion that the French had performed their work in so slovenly a manner as to have added little or nothing to what the world had already known concerning Western Australia, and that a painstaking and laborious expedition might yet bring to light much useful information.

It so happened that Captain, afterwards Sir James Stirling, whilst in command of the 'Success' frigate, was

ordered to New South Wales on a particular service, which he could not immediately carry into execution on account of the monsoon, and the Governor, Sir Ralph Darling, advised him to employ the intervening time in examining the western coast and in making up for French deficiencies.

Captain Stirling accordingly set sail, in company with Mr. Fraser a naturalist, rounded Cape Leeuwin on the 2nd of March, 1827, and, having anchored in Gage's Roads opposite the mouth of the Swan River, proceeded to inspect the country lying behind the sandy banks that skirt the coast. The scenery, which the French had slighted or with which they had, perhaps, made no acquaintance, possessed charms for the two Englishmen, and as they could not know by intuition that much of the verdure which they saw was composed of poisonous plants, they pronounced the country to be not only romantic, as indeed it is, but rich also.

If the French, however, had beheld Western Australia through a somewhat jaundiced medium when they stigmatized it as low, sandy, barren, and dreary; with little worthy of interest either in the animal, vegetable, or mineral creation; it must be confessed, on the other hand, that Captain Stirling and Mr. Fraser surveyed the same prospect through a haze, which was as much too roseate as that of their predecessors had been tinged with yellow.

It is difficult to imagine, in reading the accounts of Western Australia which were promulgated in England on Captain Stirling's return, that it is the same country as that which is described in the 'Voyage de Découvertes'; but an unfeeling captain, ill-provisioned ships, and a great

mortality from scurvy, are unfavourable conditions for seeing anything in a cheerful light; beside which it does not seem clear that the French ever penetrated to any considerable distance from the shore.

The descriptive sketch which the English explorers wrote of the new land was filled up in highly-coloured detail by the imagination of their readers, and the bar at the entrance of the river Swan, which Captain Stirling ascertained to consist of four hundred and eighty yards of limestone, with four fathoms of water on either side, was expected to drop piecemeal before the progress of civilization. The 'Annual Register' of 1828 suggests that "when a town begins to spring up upon the banks of the Swan, and substantial buildings are required, the use of the bar as a stone-quarry for architectural purposes will go far to defray the cost of removing it."

The point upon which Captain Stirling's impressions appear to have been widest of the mark was in his supposing that Western Australia was abundantly supplied with fresh water; and his observation, that the tracing of a channel in the sand with the finger would be followed by trickling drops, can only be accounted for by an unusual quantity of rain having immediately preceded his arrival, and also by the winter of the year before having been immoderately wet. Experience has proved, however, that Captain Stirling's encomiums on the West Australian climate were not exaggerated, and that his judgment was also correct in pronouncing Cockburn Sound to be the best and safest anchorage in the vicinity of the river Swan.

Cockburn Sound lies a few miles westward of Fremantle between the mainland and Garden Island, which

the French had named Buache, and the alteration of which to *Garden* is the only instance, I believe, of Captain Stirling having changed any of their denominations. Whilst the 'Success' lay off Swan River a garden had been made and fenced round upon Buache Island, and hence the alteration of the original name to one which English sailors would find more familiar. Two goats were left upon Garden Island when the 'Success' sailed away, and as I have heard that there are goats there to this day I conclude that they are descended from the original pair.

I must now hasten on to describe the causes that led to the colonization of Western Australia, and the manner in which it was conducted. According to a work entitled 'The Three Colonies of Australia,'* *i. e.* New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia, an impression prevailed, at the time of Captain Stirling's inspection of Swan River, that large fortunes, equal to those which had been already made in New South Wales, might be realized with even greater facility in a new colony unshackled with a convict population. Mr. Peel, a gentleman who had influence with Government, and who was also a cousin of the statesman, combined with certain Sydney merchants to found a colony of this experimental kind. A fitting locality was alone wanting, and the favourable reports which Captain Stirling had given of Western Australia induced Mr. Peel and the merchants to conceive that they should find in Swan River all the requisites that were necessary for the carrying out of their scheme.

"Geographical† reasons led the adventurers to expect

* 'The Three Colonies of Australia,' p. 90. Samuel Sidney. London: Ingram Cooke & Co. 1853.

† Ibid.

a temperate climate; further precise investigations as to the quality of the soil, extent of pastures, and character of the aborigines were considered unnecessary." An easy assent was obtained from Government to the proposals for making the new settlement, of which Captain Stirling was appointed the Governor, and thus the colony of Swan River (a name now associated with transportation only) commenced its first start by repudiating any admixture of convictism in its society.

The earliest colonists were chiefly composed of persons belonging to the middle and upper middle classes, whose prominent idea seemed to be that of founding a settlement of gentlemen, each of whom, it was arranged, should receive a grant of land in proportion to the number of labourers and the quantity of property that he carried out with him; the last condition being quite independent of what sort of property it was, whether such as would be of immediate use, or such as could only become useful by ingenious adaptation.

*"The official persons, from the Governor down to the humblest officers, were to be paid in land—were in fact, like the followers of the old feudal conquerors, to receive a territorial investment for the support of their official dignity. Thus the Governor had a hundred thousand acres set apart for him, whilst the humbler officers generally obtained about five thousand each. The colonists in general were to obtain land according to the means of emigration which they furnished, it being quite overlooked that those who took out free labourers could not

* 'Emigrant's Manual,' p. 91. John Hill Burton. Edinburgh: Chambers. 1851.

compel them to work for their exporters, or even to remain in the colony."

Writers on colonial subjects have generally spared but little space for observations on Western Australia, but the disastrous landing of her first white inhabitants has not wanted chroniclers. The style of it was even more remarkable than that in which the first batch of convicts was tumbled ashore in New South Wales, when the finding of an experienced bricklayer amongst them was hailed as "a piece of unexpected good fortune,"* for in 1788 it was not the fashion, as it is now, to bestow much attention to the comforts of prisoners, whereas the immigration to Swan River was voluntary, its original colonists were of a superior grade, and the value of the property which was brought out by them in the first year alone, was of a very considerable amount.

"In 1829," says the 'Emigrant's Manual,'† "the stream of emigration began to set in upon the settlement. The first settlers arrived in June and July, the mid-winter of the antipodes. Many of them were people of considerable substance, and they brought with them, besides herds, flocks and agricultural implements, sundry articles of furniture, dresses and jewellery. The ships landed them with their property on the barren shore. There were no towns or dwellings, no store-houses; no one responsible for assisting the helpless emigrants, who landed like fugitives before a pursuing enemy. The allotments could not be found, for the land had not been surveyed, and those who had so many thousands of acres assigned to them might find their property where they could.

* 'Three Colonies,' p. 27. † 'Emigrant's Manual,' p. 91.

"Before the end of the year, twenty-five ships had reached the shore, with nearly a thousand emigrants, and property worth about fifty thousand pounds. Early in the ensuing year the number of settlers and the quantity of property landed were more than doubled. The tide poured in until there was time to communicate at home the disastrous reception of the settlers. Then indeed it of a necessity subsided, and people awaited with uneasy expectation for further news from the land of promise. The intelligence was distinct enough. The colony was just as if so many people had been shipwrecked, had been able to get ashore, and then depended on the chances of finding food, or of being picked up."

The system on which the distribution of the land was carried out, helped to complete the misfortunes of the settlement. The good land was of no great extent, and what there was of it fell into the hands of those who least knew how to turn it to account, whilst for respectable men of a lower class, to whom agriculture was not an unknown science, there were no allotments left but such as would not repay cultivation.

To fill up the list of disasters, many sheep died of "poison" before the mischievous plants could even be identified; a fine stud of thorough-bred horses is said to have perished for want of water, and the casualties to which live-stock was exposed were further increased by the native habit of spearing it whenever an opportunity presented itself; the apprenticed servants were disheartened and clamoured for the cancelling of their indentures, and the gentlemen had to become day-labourers

with insufficient bone and sinew as also a want of requisite knowledge for the task.

It was then that many turned their backs upon the colony, quitting it for Sydney, Tasmania, and the Cape, where they freely denounced Swan River as sterile, unhealthy, and what not, though had the charge of unhealthiness been well founded, none but the malcontent refugees would have survived to give any account of it. It is true that many of the first immigrants died of scurvy, but the wonder is that the deaths from this cause were not far more numerous. Salt meat, which had been the principal diet on board ship, continued to be the bill of fare for many a long day after landing, and the colonists could not, of course, obtain fresh vegetables until they had sowed and grown them for themselves.

"We lived at one place for nearly two years," said one of our acquaintances, "before we knew that the ground would bear cabbages," and, under these circumstances, it did not surprise us to hear that when these cabbages came up, which had been experimentally sown, they were cut whilst only in the second leaf. Nor was this early cutting merely resorted to in order to satisfy the natural craving for green food, but sometimes also on account of veritable hunger. The ground had to be surveyed and cleared before it could be either ploughed or sowed, and long before the colonists ceased to depend upon imported corn they had twice suffered from the misery of famine. In a word, the recital of the hardships which had been undergone in those days by all who resolved to stick by the colony, or who had not the means of leaving it, excited

our admiration and pity; mixed with vexation that the same persons who had shown such brave endurance should have afterwards stooped to mend their condition by asking the Home Government for convicts.

Governor Stirling did all that was possible to be accomplished under the difficult circumstances. He sent to the Cape for corn, and bought up all private stores of flour amongst the immigrants at a fixed rate; he also paid a visit to England in 1832, for the purpose of laying before the Colonial Office the deplorable state of the settlement, and his return to Swan River in the following year infused fresh courage into the disheartened band, and animated all to new exertion.

If the want of common sense that characterized the colonization of Swan River had not caused so much ruin and misery, it would be difficult to contemplate the landing of its first immigrants from any point of view but that of the absurd. The sort of goods with which the ships were freighted would almost lead one to suppose that the passengers had expected to step from their floating homes to a row of ready-built handsome houses, in which they would have nothing to do but sit down and unpack the furniture which they had brought with them. Every appurtenance of civilized life that could encumber a colony at its outset littered the beach after the vessels were unladen. Thus, for a country that had neither roads nor inns, one or two travelling carriages had been provided—pianos, of course, were not forgotten, and I even heard of a harp being brought ashore, which my informant was careful to add "had a gold ball at the top."

I am bound to confess that the owners of the equipages

turned them to good account, for they slept inside them after landing—pianos, too, were of use for the sake of their packing-cases in a country where the natural woods are so hard that a bit of soft deal is a great prize. But the line of utility, stretch and extend it how one would, could not be made to comprehend harps, and the instrument with its gold ball was re-shipped, and finally found a resting-place in the Isle of France.

The greater part of the immigrants bivouacked under tents, but many of them had not even the protection of canvas, and crept for shelter into the caves upon the sea-shore, in one of which I was told that a family had lived for a fortnight, and that the mother lost the use of her limbs from rheumatism in consequence.

Winter in Swan River is a very windy time, and one of the annoyances of living in tents was the frequent necessity for running out in the middle of the night to secure such ropes as the wind had blown loose. The insecurity of the tents in the strong winter gales was a fact to which I often heard the older colonists allude as one of their miseries, suggesting to my mind that the piano, on which a lady assured me that she had been used to play whilst she lived under canvas, must have been very much out of tune.

One of the settlers, who had landed as a boy, told me that the duty of fastening the ropes of the family tent had devolved upon himself and his brother, and that on one especial night when they had to leave their beds on this service, they were rendered more wakeful than usual by the sound of signal guns from a ship in distress. The boys made their way to the beach, where, distinguishing

nothing in the darkness excepting one person walking up and down alone who had been aroused by the firing, they thought it best to go back to bed. When morning broke a vessel with a fresh load of immigrants was observed to be grounded upon a sand-bank, with the waves beating heavily on her. The passengers and crew, however, were all rescued, although in nearing the shore a boatload of women and children was capsized in the surf. The boys, of course, were eager spectators of the affair, and a little girl who was fished out of the water eventually became the wife of one of them.

The failure of Swan River put a final end to the system of free grants of land in Australia; but either this fact was not universally known, or a supposition existed in Barladong that, in case of overwhelming merit, the practice might be revived of rewarding private individuals with Government fiefs.

Whatever the necessary pitch of deserving might be, a hard-working neighbour of ours, whose worldly wealth consisted of a little flock of some dozen or so of goats, deemed that he had reached the requisite climax on the morning that his wife presented him with twins. Perhaps he had dim recollections of clergymen at home duly advising their sovereign of the advent of three subjects born at a birth, and may have thought, not altogether unreasonably, that twins being somewhat of a similar phenomenon in Swan River, and free immigrants wanted there, a grateful Government might express its sense of the obligation he had conferred on it by endowing his progeny with a few acres.

He therefore waylaid us as we were riding past his mud

dwelling, the road in front of which was littered with children and little kids sitting together in the dust, and begged my husband to draw up a petition for him to His Excellency, "praying him to bestow a small grant of land upon the two youngest members of the goatherd's family." My husband willingly undertook the task, and acquitted himself of it in a most moving manner, but the higher powers were not to be mollified, even by the merits of twins, and the case was rejected as one that justified no departure from existing rules.

The idea that West Australia might yet offer a valuable field for the investment of English capital was not quite effaced by the result of the disastrous programme for the colonizing of Swan River, and a plan for the formation of a second settlement was ushered into existence ten years later by some London speculators, who composed what was called the "Australind Company." The name of Australind which was bestowed on the new colony had, possibly, been chosen with a view of calling attention to the advantages of its geographical position, for, ever since the first settling of Swan River, West Australians have been reminding the Indian public that they are its near neighbours, and that their colonial air would greatly benefit the children of residents in Bengal.

The site of Australind was fixed at Leschenault Inlet, in a southern direction from Perth, and the persons who embarked their fortunes in the settlement were of the same class in society as the original immigrants to Swan River. But in spite of the experience which had been earned for the Australind settler by the mistakes and misfortunes of his forerunner, the same disappointments

that befell the one also awaited the other, and apparently from causes that were very similar. It is true that the custom of excessive free grants had ceased to exist, and that the Australind immigrants were "located on sections of one hundred acres each,"* but there was a repetition of blighted expectations—of insufficiency of good land—of servants turning refractory—of masters being compelled to betake themselves to field labour, however unfitted they might have been by previous habits of life for such employment. In fact, it was the same old story of people in comfortable circumstances rushing blindfold into discomfort of every imaginable kind, without any succeeding compensation.

Even the lesser details of the Australind settlement bore a strong resemblance to those of the landing of the Swan River immigrants, such, for instance, as people living in a tent for six months, and then being totally deprived of it in a windy night of July, and of a house door being made out of the packing-case of a piano.

Eventually the settlement collapsed and came to a comparatively quiet end, but its failure helped to fasten on the colony of Swan River more firmly than ever that worst of misfortunes, a bad name, and thenceforward the mention of Western Australia to English ears elicited no other response than a sigh or a silent shrug of the shoulders.

Had the discovery of the mineral districts preceded, instead of having followed, the settling of Australind, there can be little doubt that the "company" would have commenced mining operations amongst the rich veins of

* 'Report on the Statistics of Western Australia in 1840.' Perth, 1841.

lead and copper at Champion Bay, in preference to collecting a few sheep and cattle farmers on the limited pastures of Leschenault Inlet.

The metal-bearing country was stated* in 1862 to occupy a space of between four and five thousand square miles, one-fourth of which was "known to contain extensive beds of copper and lead, and seams of coal, with silver, antimony, plumbago, and arsenic and iron in smaller quantities; minute specks of gold have also been found by washing the sands in the beds of some of the streams." The lead and copper workings which have been established have proved that the quality of both ores is very fine, but the same circumstances which have obstructed the development of the colony since its commencement, and prevented it from outgrowing its early disadvantages, have also hindered the owners of the mines from realizing any vast amount of profit, and what those circumstances arise from will be related in the following chapter.

* 'Descriptive Catalogue of the Collection of Products and Manufactures contributed by the Colony of West Australia to the International Exhibition of 1862.'

CHAPTER XIV.

Swan River immigrants begin to see their position — Valuable commercial products of Western Australia — Scanty means of turning them to account — Settlers decide upon asking Home Government for convicts — Suitability of colony as vast jail — Rations — Schemes for improving circumstances of colony — Superior class of prisoners in early convict ships — Long sentences — Government expenditure required in West Australia for many years to come — Frequent allusion to Government — Government men — Proposal scouted for introduction of Government women — Difficulty of procuring female immigrants — Women disheartened on landing — Bigamy — Situation of convicts' wives — Ultra-Protestantism — Child surreptitiously carried out to be christened — Matrimonial disputes — Social inequalities — Small number of respectable women — A convict's wedding — Shifting nature of population — Glazier cannot come — Effect of familiarity with crime — Causes assigned by convicts for being transported — The tax-cart, and other anecdotes — Convict geologist — "Addicted to sharpening of a knife" — Convicts in church — No rule without exception — Religious instruction of convicts on road parties much overlooked formerly — Present position of chaplains — Impossibility under existing circumstances of chaplains' visits being of much benefit to road parties — Books craved for — Warder's disappointment on examining box — Convicts' notions on week-day and Sunday services — Sort of books preferred by convicts — Sitting near the pulpit — Effect on personal comfort produced by convict servants — London pickpocket — Preference for machinery in place of convict labour.

HAVING now concluded the episode of the Australind settlement, I must turn back to the history of the Swan River immigrants and their brave buffetings with evil fortune. The discovery that not only would all the garden vegetables thrive in Western Australia, but that its climate was also splendidly adapted for producing corn, did not, unluckily, put a period to the disappointments of the

colonists. The struggle, at first, had been one of life and death, and when experience proved that starvation was no longer to be dreaded, the minds of individuals naturally reverted to the original purpose with which they had left England—namely, that of making their fortunes.

Now the mistake had been committed of settling the country without duly scanning it beforehand, and time, which revealed its many valuable commercial products, brought also the disheartening conviction that there were scarcely any means of turning them into money. An impracticable desert was found to lie between West Australia and its neighbours on the landward side, and the exploring of the long stretch of seaboard convinced the colonists that in a coast-line of some three thousand miles, King George's Sound, in the extreme south of the settlement, was the only natural harbour of which their territory boasted, that was fit for large vessels. Moreover, though the dimensions of Western Australia comprise geographically one-third of the continent, its available land extends no farther back from the coast than two hundred miles at the utmost, nor is this narrow fringe otherwise than disconnected, and consisting of watered patches here and there, rather than of an uninterrupted line of good country. Behind this circumscribed belt the utmost exertions have as yet failed to discover either fresh-water lakes or rivers.

This want of a background to the colony has been of course very detrimental to its prospects, but in an infinitely less degree than its scanty means of communication with the rest of the world. On this last account the settlers have been driven to look upon wool as their staple

article of export because it could be packed and shipped without much trouble, whereas they would long ago have ceased to deplore the "poison," which limits the size of their sheep-runs, could any easy transmission have been found for the innumerable horses which might have been bred upon the same ground which has proved so fatal to their flocks.

If an easy land communication existed between Perth and Adelaide a lively picture might be drawn of the position which Western Australia would assume. Rich in lead, copper, and ironstone, with forests equivalent to unlimited beds of coal, she might be the manufacturing district to the whole of Australia, whilst at the same time its granary and vineyard. Instead of importing salt she might supply it to other countries from her salt lakes, and a colonial Wedgwood would possibly find a better use for kaolin than that of whitening a kitchen chimney. The mulberry-trees would be filled with silkworms, and olive oil, instead of travelling to West Australia from Italy *viâ* England, would be produced from the abundant berries which drop from the colonial olive-trees, unregarded at present by any but pigs and children. But articles of commerce which there is no means of carrying to market, are as useless to their owners as the Spanish gold pieces were to Robinson Crusoe upon his desert island; and the colonists, after struggling with their ill-luck for twenty years, devised a plan which they were fain to think would bring a market to their own very doors.

It was plain that, in spite of the "poison," a great deal more mutton could be grown in the colony than was needed for the consumption of its inhabitants, and if an

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extraneous population could but be introduced which should eat the superfluity, and the Home Government be induced to pay the bill of fare, matters might even yet improve in Swan River. Conditions of this kind limited the choice of persons to convicts, but as these would be accompanied by a train of Government officials and police, the colonists decided upon asking for them, and accordingly petitioned that their country might be converted into a penal settlement. As such, its geographical disadvantages assumed a different character, for the havenless shore and impassable woods which had excluded trade, superseded in great measure the necessity of building prison walls. In fact, viewed simply as a jail, the colony appeared as if Nature had intended it for no other purpose, and this point having been duly recognized in England, the bidden guests soon arrived in such numbers as to give Fremantle a resemblance to the lion's den in the fable, the threshold of which bore traces only of footsteps that had entered, but of none that ever had returned.

I could not help remarking that an amusing sort of self-deception prevailed amongst the West Australians in a habit of expressing themselves as if they had done the mother-country a great favour in receiving the criminals whom they themselves had asked for, and that she could only relieve herself from a heavy burden of gratitude by the expenditure of correspondingly heavy sums of money for the good of her colonial benefactors.

My husband once asked a settler, with some surprise, at the close of a meeting which had been called for the purpose of urging upon Government the necessity of

building additional police barracks in our town, what possible reason he could have for thinking that the larger police barracks were required. The settler appeared to think, like Sir Andrew Aguecheek, that he had "reason good enough," and frankly owned that its strength consisted in the fact that Government had lately built new barracks in a town fifty miles off, thus incurring the obligation, so our friend thought, to expend a similar sum of money in the town where he resided.

Inasmuch, however, as to eat is a daily necessity, and each prisoner and each warder whose business it is to look after him represents a person requiring to be fed, the Government building contracts are somewhat less eagerly competed for than the contracts for supplying road parties and convict depôts with "rations." This word "ration" is as potential in Western Australia as the "all-mighty dollar" in America, and a stranger has gained no insight into the real internal state of the colony until he becomes aware that the pivot on which society turns is the canvassing for the various Government contracts, and that enemies shake hands, and friends become foes, according to the publication of results.

However much this state of things is to be regretted, it is no more than might have been expected in a colony dependent upon a large Government expenditure, and excluded from all ordinary means of making money, save this one of supplying the necessaries of life upon a large scale to an artificial population. The feeding of other people—whether soldiers, sailors, police, or prisoners—and the cost to be defrayed by Government, seemed to be the one panacea for all colonial disasters. Thus I heard it

averred that a military officer had done West Australia a great wrong in representing to the Home Government that five companies of the line formed a larger body of men than were required there; and another set of advisers were incessantly desiring to recommend the virtues of the climate to the notice of physicians, in order that the colony should be resorted to as a gigantic Sanitarium by invalid soldiers from India.

However unlikely it may be that the Home Government regarded the settlers' request for convicts in the light of disinterested benevolence, there can be no doubt that it was made at an extremely convenient moment for English legislators, and that, so far, Western Australia deserves well at their hands. The Cape colonists had just declared that convicts "must not, could not, and should not" be landed in South Africa, and the willingness of the people in Swan River to accept them relieved the Government from a present dilemma, and perhaps staved off for some time longer the question of compulsory education. At all events it appears to have been judged impolitic to let the applicants find out too soon the nature of the boon which they had demanded, for the best-disposed prisoners in the English jails were selected to make up the first shiploads sent to the colony.

As time passed on a much worse class of criminals composed the cargoes, so that to have "come out" in one of the first ships was a point on which a man might deservedly pride himself. Comparisons were indeed so much in favour of the first comers, that even the long term of transportation to which all of them had been condemned was regarded as no disparagement by the settlers, whilst

from the men's own point of view, "a long sentence" appeared to confer a certain degree of dignity.

I remember a poor decrepit old Yorkshireman emphasizing, with many shakes of the head, the fact of his sentence having been "Two-and-twenty year, and I've served every one of 'em!" His air and his manner, in pronouncing these words, was that of a man who might have been quitting as honourable a calling as the army or navy, with an extra pension for good conduct. He had been lodged for a time, on account of old age and infirmity, in the asylum at Fremantle, which receives within its walls both sane and insane persons, and when I remonstrated with him on his having quitted it he assigned as a reason for doing so that the exercise yard of the "barmy fellows," as he called the madmen, (meaning, I suppose, that their brains were in an unnatural state of working,) was but a stone's throw from himself and his rational companions, a circumstance of which the inmates of the said yard were accustomed to avail themselves, according to his account, in a literal sense, for the purpose of annoying their neighbours by volleys of pebbles.

One result of petitioning for convicts, which year by year will make itself more heavily felt, is the burden of maintaining so great a number of useless persons as these poor quondam rogues become in their old age. A large pauper population would be bad enough, even if it were composed of no worse elements than the men belonging to the earlier convict ships; but of the later human consignments the best that could be said was, that they were utterly useless as labourers, and that the aggregate was made up of hardened villains. Under these circumstances

one thing is certain, that, for many years to come, a large expenditure of Government money will be required in Western Australia. The colony has been saturated with professors of crime, and if, by the withdrawal of home supplies, the dangerous classes within it should ever want bread, the position of the free settlers would be very terrible.

The frequent reference in West Australia to the word "Government," and the manner in which it was alluded to, might have led one to suppose that it was an imaginary creature whose character varied with that of each person who spoke of it, and with the peculiar views which he or she took of things in general. Thus I have known it quoted by children to sanction their having pelted a turkey to death, on the plea that "Mother says as how it is Government ground, and we may do as we like."

Or again, it was represented as possessed with especial spite and malice towards one individual convict, who would express his inward belief that "Government had a down upon him." Or as a landlord to whom no sort of consideration was due; thus I remember a warder's wife telling me what trouble she had taken in their last "quarters" to keep the boards white by scrubbing them with sand, but who broke off in her recital as if ashamed of the pleasure that she had felt in her cleanliness, and sighed out "the more fool I, for wasting such pains upon a Government floor."

"Government men" is also the self-chosen style and title of the convicts, and the only definition of their estate which they accept from the outer world without resentment. Happily for the future of Western Australia, it

contains no such persons as "Government women," though the question was once mooted by some of the settlers as to whether a small number of female convicts should not be admitted. The proposal, however, met with so much disapprobation in the colony that it was at once withdrawn, and the opposite course was adopted of begging the Emigration Commissioners to send out respectable women, unacquainted with the interior of jail or penitentiary, who might act as domestic servants, and reclaim the convicts by becoming their wives.

The authorities might have answered, "I can call spirits from the vasty deep," but call as they would, respectable single women, however poor they might be, entirely declined to come out to Swan River to become the wives of even "reformed" criminals, and it has been found impossible to obtain a sufficient number of young women, even of such a class as the greater part of our fellow-passengers on board ship, to supply wives to one-half of the single convicts now at liberty. Hence arises the deplorable inequality between the numbers of the single men and single women shown by the census of 1870; an inequality however, which seems likely to have *one* good result, since from the comparatively small number of convicts who have been able to marry and bring up families, and the rapid diminution of the older men by death, it seems probable that the convict element of the colony will not make so large a mark upon the future population as might naturally be expected, but will gradually die out, now that the yearly supply is stopped.

Few as the emigrant girls were we often wished that their numbers had been even less, so many were the

histories that we knew concerning them of wretched disappointment and moral deterioration. The strong demand for single women has induced those individuals to whom the task has been entrusted of meeting it to regard the case too much from one point of view only, and decent girls being found unwilling to emigrate to a penal colony, the fact that it is one has sometimes been concealed from them until after they have sailed, whilst in the meantime they have generally received a description of its merits altogether fabulous.

The wages of women servants (charwomen excepted, who receive the disproportionately large sum of three shillings a day) are not higher than in England, and the work is much harder and rougher than at home on account of the hot summers and the absence of home conveniences. It is true that the trouble of blackleading and polishing grates and fire-irons is obviated by the custom of burning wood upon the open hearths, but of other compensations to a girl for the quitting of friends, home, and country, there are none to enumerate, and in all other respects the change is for the worse.

The female immigrants are disheartened, immediately after landing, by finding convicts for fellow-servants, and the additional discovery that the prospects of marriage offer nothing better than a selection from the same class, causes those girls who have friends already settled in Sydney or Melbourne, resolutely to save money in order that they may join them there. The larger trading vessels thus annually carry away a little stream of women from the colony, but they are the fortunate few—the greater number remain, and become convicts' wives, or perhaps

nominal wives, for it has been computed that out of a hundred convicts' marriages in Swan River forty of them only are legal, the rest being simply acts of bigamy on the part of the men. This is not, however, for want of swearing to the contrary, for, the solemn vows of the religious service itself not being thought sufficient by the colonial legislators, the reading of it is preceded by secular oaths, which the clergyman is obliged to administer, to the effect that no lawful hindrances exist to the union. This preamble, which gives an additional opportunity of perjury, is considered to supersede the necessity of banns, which are not legally required in the colony, and any marriage may take place at five minutes' notice, except in the Church of England.

A person of our acquaintance once received a letter from an unknown female correspondent in England, asking for news of her husband, who was, she said, a ticket-of-leave holder in the service of the person to whom she addressed herself. The writer proceeded to say that, in consequence of having heard nothing of her husband for a year past, she had thought it best to apply to his master for tidings of him, and concluded her letter with sending him affectionate messages from "his six sons and only daughter." I never heard whether an answer was returned to the letter; but we were told that the subject of its inquiries "turned all colours" when it was laid before him, as indeed he well might, for, having always passed himself off as a single man, he had prevailed on an Irish immigrant girl to marry him three months before.

However, although no such discovery as that of a prior wife may await the convict's bride, there is seldom much

comfort in store for her. It is not by any means that such men always prove unkind husbands, but the associations that such marriages bring with them cannot fail to entail misery upon decent women. Let anyone suppose herself surrounded with acquaintances whose every-day language it is of itself a real calamity to hear, and whose countenances partake more or less of a likeness to such vagrants as one would dislike to meet alone in a narrow lane, and some sort of notion may then be had of the visiting list of a convict in Western Australia. In other society marriage gives a man the opportunity of dropping undesirable acquaintanceships, but there seems no possibility of ever being rid of those which have been formed in jail; they have a tenacity which better friendships sometimes lack.

One of the heaviest parts of a convict's punishment, offering also the severest hindrance to his reformation, is that he has it not in his power to shake himself so entirely free from old companions as that they shall never enter his doors; he cannot, if he would, in a penal settlement stand altogether aloof from the class with which crime has identified him, and the meeting of former associates ends too often in the hatching of new offences. Then comes reconviction, and the wife must shift for herself whilst the husband spends a fresh term in jail. If she is a Roman Catholic the opportunity of the husband's absence, for a fixed and definite period, is perhaps utilized for sending the child or children to a school of her own faith, at the probable cost to herself of a beating when the head of the family is liberated, for, as if there were not already sufficient seeds of discord in a body of men made up of waifs

from pretty nearly all nations, the "odium theologicum" helps to fill up the measure.

The professions of ultra-Protestantism that we used to meet with amongst the convicts frequently reminded me of the experience of Lord George Gordon's servant, in 'Barnaby Rudge,' that "Protestants were very fond of spoons, when airy doors were left open," and to those persons who regard the name of Protestant as expressing a religion in itself, it must be a matter of surprise that so many of these pretended devotees come to be transported. On the other hand, a great proportion of the immigrant women who marry the Protestants are Roman Catholics; a circumstance which forms a constant standing ground for bickerings, giving any disagreements the peculiar bitterness of all quarrels that have religion for a pretext.

On returning from a walk, one winter's day, we found that in our absence a native had come running to our house with a slip of paper, on which was written a request that the clergyman should lose no time in hastening to the cottage of a man named M'Dougall to baptize a dying child. My husband went to M'Dougall's as quickly as he could after receiving the message, and, finding that the poor baby was already dead, remained some time, endeavouring to comfort the parents, both of whom, he supposed, were sadly grieved that it had been deprived of baptism.

Next morning before daylight we were aroused by a loud knocking at our door, where stood M'Dougall in a terrible state of anger and determination. He had discovered, since the previous evening, that his child had not died unbaptized; but that a few days before its death, when his back

was turned, the nurse, with his wife's connivance, had whisked it off to the priest, and now that he had found it out he was resolved on repairing the evil as far as yet lay in his power. Let who might have christened the child it should at least have the advantage of being buried amongst Protestants, and, as his own business took him betimes into the bush, he had come at this early hour to make sure of appointing the funeral. It was throwing words away to tell M'Dougall that the baptism which his child had received was valid. Although he insisted on his having been brought up a Presbyterian, religion had plainly nothing to do with the matter, but the being made a fool of had a great deal; the promised funeral seemed alone to placate him, and; the certificate of baptism having been obtained from the priest, the poor baby was duly buried.

Two years afterwards my husband was again sent for by M'Dougall's wife to baptize another child, which was also dead on his arrival: this time he offered no consolation feeling sure that the mother had acted alike on both occasions, and that she had purposely delayed her request for his attendance until within a few moments of the infant's death.

Another Roman Catholic woman once came to our house to beg that we would remonstrate with her Protestant husband on his ill-treatment of her; the priest also, as we afterwards found by comparing notes with him, having been waited upon by the man to bespeak a reproof for the wife, on account of her misconduct towards himself; though it was not often that the conflicting parties adopted such moderate measures. I recommended the woman to fill her mouth with water when her husband was angry, that she might prevent herself from giving him provocation by

spiteful answers, but, unfortunately, my prescription wanted the charm of novelty: "the Sisters," at Perth, she said, had already advised the same.

Where, however, the name of religion was not dragged in as a reason for matrimonial disputes, there were two other causes which produced an unfailing supply. These were the drunkenness of the men, and the wounded pride of the women caused by the unavoidable consciousness that the tabooed position of the convict was reflected upon his wife. Under these deplorable circumstances the only phase of married life which seemed compatible with any degree of happiness was that of persons engaged in cultivating a piece of land remote from neighbours, where the necessity for working hard, and the difficulty of obtaining drink, might help to keep both parties in their right senses. Very little actual money is made by these small farmers; but the pigs and fowls, which they rear at slight cost, supply them with a better table than falls to the lot of day-labourers at home, while the loneliness of the situation causes that colonial line of separation between bond and free to be forgotten, which, inevitable though it be, resembles the distinctions in America between white and coloured people.

The habit of immoderate drinking which prevailed in the colonial towns was not by any means confined to the men, nor even to those women, only, who were chafed by social inequalities. We had lived but one fortnight in our Australian parsonage before learning how rare it was to find a woman, amongst our poorer neighbours, of whom it could be said that she was habitually sober. An old resident whom I asked to recommend me a washerwoman,

replied that she knew of none better than her own, "who sometimes came too drunk to do her work."

The notion that all were equally intemperate was incorrect, but the number of respectable poor women was very small, and, as time passed on, was diminished rather than increased. It was evident to us, after living some time in the colony, that a much greater amount of vice was becoming apparent on the surface than had been the case when we landed, not that we had grown more observant, but that the quick relays of convict ships were fast gorging the place with offenders. Female deterioration was in proportion, and those who, under the invisible restraints of home, might have remained innocent and useful, became such as women only can become whom fate has cast adrift upon a penal settlement.

My husband once performed a marriage where the person who stood proxy for the bride's father, and gave her away, was one who had been transported for cutting his own wife's head off; and the news which reached us, three weeks afterwards, of the bridegroom having been arrested on suspicion of murder, seemed a fitting sequel to such ill-omened nuptials. The newly-married wife came in great distress to acquaint us of the fact, and, under pretence of asking our advice, to beg money for providing her husband with a lawyer. She carried in her arms a baby of a fortnight old, whose wide open eyes might have been supposed, by a fanciful observer, to exhibit astonishment at the sort of society that it had stepped into on the threshold of life.

With the exception of the pensioners' families the population that surrounded us was a very shifting one.

The smaller sort of tenements were continually changing their inhabitants, and I remember one house that was occupied by five different families in as many years, besides sometimes standing empty. Ticket-of-leave holders, as a rule, never seemed stationary for any length of time. They migrated hither and thither, seeking for work or exchanging masters, and often disappeared for a period, having, as they movingly expressed it, "got into trouble." "Getting into trouble" involved a return to the "Establishment"—a word so naturalized in the colony as denoting the Government prison, that a warder's child once asked me in the Sunday school whether "John Howard had not been a great man for going about to see Establishments?"

Most of the convicts had learned, or more properly speaking had half learned, some handicraft or trade in the jail which they followed when they came out; but their customers were always liable to suffer inconvenience from an unexpected suspension of the business. A broken window has, perhaps, made us uncomfortable, and the glazier has been sent for to come and mend it. The fact of my messenger returning with, "Please, ma'am, the glazier can't come, for he has got two months," would be sufficient intimation that we must patch up our window, and wait for our tradesman's enlargement.

One of our released acquaintances commenced the business of carrier between Barladong and Perth, and for some little time executed our commissions with praiseworthy zeal and punctuality. On one especial occasion I had entrusted him with the task of procuring me a clothes-basket, which was a luxury unattainable in any

store at Barladong. He did not return as usual; a week passed, and the basket was brought to me by a stranger, with the tidings that our carrier was a *détenu*. He had been as exact as usual in executing his customers' commissions, but had, somehow or other, failed to get clear of Perth without forfeiting his liberty.

Such incidents were sometimes laughable, but they had also a very grave side, for the inevitable effect of this state of things was a general lowering of the standard of morals throughout the colony. Crime was such an every-day affair that its constant recurrence was looked on as a matter of course, and of no great importance unless the delinquent had transgressed the rights of property. Moral character was therefore but little considered, and, provided that a woman had not been caught thieving, she was styled "respectable," and judged worthy of being entrusted with employments for which in England her manner of life would have rendered her totally ineligible. We seemed to have come out of pure fresh air into a close and contaminated atmosphere, while those whom we found living in it seemed unconscious of the taint, and to think us unreasonable for making any objections.

As to the causes assigned by the convicts and their friends for their banishment they were many and curious, but their chief interest centred in the fact that trial by jury seemed to have answered no other end, generally speaking, than that of getting the wrong man punished. One convict, according to his wife's statement, had been "sent out" only through keeping a cart and letting it out to hire. Certain parties chartered it, assigning no

object in doing so, and drove off the same night to the house of a neighbouring gentleman. Most unfortunately, when returned to its owner the cart was found to contain the whole of the gentleman's plate. Here was a plain case, one would have thought, of a *cart* being misled and induced to aid in a burglary, but where was the justice of condemning a *man* to ten years' transportation in consequence of the aberrations of his vehicle! A second man had borrowed money from a bank, intending, he said, to rectify his disordered balance in three days' time, when he would again be in funds. Unfortunately the cashier was not present when the loan was effected, and *he* harshly called it a robbery. A third; a soldier, had struck his officer without the slightest provocation, and considered himself most severely used by "getting ten years," inasmuch as he was an innocent victim to the misdeeds of Bacchus. "Why, I was bastely drunk," seemed to him an ample excuse for his crime. A fourth had sacrificed himself to fraternal affection; his brother's appetite could only be tempted by hare and pheasant, and, no poulterer's shop being at hand, he had used his own ingenuity to supply the deficiency. A fifth, on whom I suppose a Recorder had passed sentence, regarded it as an extenuating circumstance that he had not been condemned "by a regular judge." In fact we could arrive at no other conclusion than that we must have left all the rogues at home, since we found none but honest men in Western Australia.

There was, however, one convict who departed from the general rule of pleading Not Guilty, and professed to have committed forgery on purpose to be sent to Western Australia. Having become a prisoner in the "Establish-

ment" he signified to his jailers that, if the Government would accept him as a *cicerone*, he would indicate a distant spot on the coast where gold was to be had for the picking up. When asked how he came to know of such a place, he said that he had been a sailor on board a Dutch vessel which had touched on the shore, and that he had seen the gold lying on the beach. Prevented only, it is to be supposed, by a conscientious regard to the duties which he owed to his Dutch skipper, he did not abscond from his work to pocket the treasure at once; on the contrary with great self-denial he returned quietly to Europe, and having made his way to Liverpool meditated anxiously as to the best means of getting back to his El Dorado. After much thought no scheme presented itself which promised to afford pleasanter society, or to involve so little personal expense, as a berth in a convict ship; he therefore committed a forgery, and in this way luckily booked his passage at once.

I do not know whether anybody thought of asking him what course he had intended to pursue in case a stupid jury had found him innocent, but, anyhow, the inventor of this farrago of falsehood was taken on board a vessel, and carried to that part of the coast which he had named as the promised land. He was then landed under guard, and requested to point out the exact spot where he had seen the gold, which he did with great precision. His intentions to escape now became so apparent, that he was tied to a tree whilst the rest of the party dug and searched. On their finding no gold he bethought him, of a sudden, that he must have made a mistake, and "prospected" copper instead; had he said brass, it would have been

more to the purpose, but that would have been too much like telling the truth; it is needless to add that beneath this geologist's auspices was found neither copper nor gold.

Nevertheless, a convict's autobiography was not always entirely untrue, though his manner of relating it might be absurd. We met with one man who commenced the history of his misfortunes by saying that "he had been always much addicted to the sharpening of a knife," and that, having been engaged in this favourite pursuit and in a quarrel with his wife at the same time, she had called in the police, and had sworn that he had tried to cut her throat. In consequence of this asseveration on her part, and of the belief accorded to her assertions, he had been condemned to transportation for a lengthened period.

That this love of improving his cutlery could be the sole cause of the condition that he was then in appeared to us very improbable, but we had afterwards reason to think that there might be some grains of truth in the tale. In compliance with his request that his wife should be told how anxious he was to treat her kindly, if she would consent to join him with their child, and of his hopes that they might "turn over a new leaf" and live happily together, we wrote to our own friends upon the subject, and through their means the woman's whereabouts was discovered, but the tidings were discouraging; the woman showed no disposition to return to her husband; her character was very bad, and, to quote the account sent to us, "the general impression amongst her neighbours was that her misconduct had excited him to commit the crime for which he had been punished." It was sad to

give the poor man no better news, but possibly the "new leaf" which such a woman would have turned over in Western Australia would have been an infinitely worse page than any that had preceded it.

On Sundays the inmates of the convict depôt were marched once a day to church, where, sitting on the benches especially appropriated to their use, and wearing their best suit of white arrow-marked jackets, they offered a painful spectacle, looking like Crown serfs, or a modern type of persons "put to open penance" before the congregation. When seen apart from his fellows a convict's face bears often no peculiarly evil characteristics, but when many such are ranged together the countenances have I know not what of indescribable and oppressive, suggesting perhaps most forcibly the idea that their owners have run away from a criminal lunatic asylum; an impression strengthened by the fact that the forehead is almost invariably low and retreating, even amongst the more intelligent of the men.

To road parties that are stationed beyond easy walking distance from a church Sunday is distinguished from week days only by a cessation from work, unless a chaplain rides out purposely to give the men a religious service. Even in the exemption from stone breaking on the Sunday the axiom holds good of there being no rule without an exception. We once pulled up our horse on a journey to ask for a draught of water at the camp of a road party beyond our own district, and, whilst supplying our want, the warder informed us that amongst his prisoners was a Jew, to whom, in consequence of his refusal to work on Saturdays, he had been instructed to

apportion a full day's labour every Sunday. The pain to the warder of desecrating the Christian day of rest was probably none the less from the fact of his being a Scotchman; in his own words, the marking out of the Sunday task "made the blood run chill in his veins."

At the time of our first acquaintance with Western Australia, the question of how the convicts in the road parties and country depôts should be furnished with religious instruction, did not appear to have come under the consideration of the Home Government. The two chief prisons at Fremantle and Perth were indeed supplied with chaplains specially appointed, whose entire duties lay within the prison walls, and as long as the men remained in either of these two jails all was as it should be—the chaplains possessed their legitimate position and authority, and the men were properly cared for, moreover the means existed of obtaining a salutary influence by private intercourse with each individual prisoner.

But when the prisoners were sent away from Fremantle to the depôts or road parties in the interior, the case was altered. No chaplains were officially employed solely as jail chaplains to the depôts or road parties, although the men were just as much under prison discipline and restraint as their brethren in the "Establishment," and it is usually thought advisable that a clergyman employed in the care of prisoners still in confinement should be able to devote his attention to them exclusively, and should have no other employment. The strict attention to rule and method, the constant reference to prison regulations, the endless number of printed forms to be filled up daily, all of which things are matters of necessity in a prison, seem

out of place and burthensome to a clergyman employed in the charge of an ordinary country parish.

When the depôts were first established in various country towns, and road parties were sent out to work in the country districts, often at distances of twenty and thirty miles from the nearest church, the question as to the religious superintendence of the convicts seems, at first, to have escaped notice. The country chaplains had been accustomed to regard their flocks as being composed of three classes—the first of which consisted of the free settlers, the second of those convicts who had received their ticket-of-leave and become to a considerable extent free men, and the third comprising those who had served the full time of their sentence and become expirees.

The original ground of the appointment of chaplains in the country districts was the dread felt by the settlers lest a large population of such manumitted prisoners should grow up around them, unwatched, untaught, and uncared for; and it was chiefly from the hope that a resident clergyman might influence these liberated men, and strive to improve them, that parsonages and churches were built throughout the colony. The chaplains, naturally, looked upon the settlers and "freed men" as forming their true parishioners, and regarded the convicts still under prison restraint, who were sent to the depôts in their district, as a distinct and separate class, who were governed by rules and forms of which they knew nothing, and who ought to have special chaplains to take charge of them as long as they were under prison rule.

To learn that three or four large road parties had been sent into his district gave a chaplain, in the earlier years

of transportation, much of the same sort of feeling with which his English brother would regard the quartering of a body of soldiers in his parish for a lengthened stay. The chaplains were willing to do all that lay in their power for these unfortunate men, such as lending them books, visiting them when ill, giving them a service on the Sunday when it was possible to pass near a road party on the way to one of their own churches, and so forth: but the generality of the country chaplains considered that their chief duties were towards the families of the settlers, and of the ticket-of-leave class, and that anything they could do for the unreleased convicts was of secondary importance in comparison.

It is a pity that when the subject first began to acquire importance by the rapid increase in the number of road parties, and of the number of patients in the depôt hospitals, the Home Government did not ask all the chaplains whether they would be willing, officially, to undertake the duties of visiting the road parties and depôts if they were paid a small increase to their stipends, and were granted an allowance to enable them to keep a horse. Very few chaplains would have refused, probably not even one, and much unpleasant feeling and dissatisfaction would have been avoided.

Matters are now completely altered—the country chaplains are now as thoroughly prison chaplains as their brother at the Fremantle prison, except indeed in point of income. They are now obliged to devote by far the greater part of their time to periodical visits to all the road parties in their district, of some twenty miles by thirty, perhaps, in extent. The forms which they are

obliged to fill up are endless, and the good which they can hope to do to the men is infinitesimal, since they can scarcely ever see a man alone, or even make an attempt to win his confidence.

The only way in which a convict can be induced to talk freely and honestly to his pastor is to see him alone in a room at the parsonage if possible, (not at the prison,) then to enter into conversation with him about indifferent matters until he has lost his prison tone of voice and manners, (which are as different as possible to his natural ones,) and, when at last he begins to speak like a man and not like a machine, it may be possible to do something with him. But neither at a depôt nor in the camp of a road party can the chaplain see any of the men alone without considerable difficulty and parade, since at neither place is any special provision for that object thought necessary. If a prisoner should express a wish to speak to the clergyman alone he must name that desire to the warder, and the interview will take place either in the warder's quarters or in the clerk's office if at the depôt, or in the men's sleeping hut if in the bush.

All these long rides, all this filling up of forms is a mere matter of outside regularity and respectability, and it is impossible for the chaplain to learn anything of the men's individual character thereby. The chaplain rides up, the warder summons the men—"Attention, get your books for 'service"— the short service is over, and the chaplain says to his congregation, of perhaps ten Protestants out of the sixteen men who may compose the party, "Well, men, any wish to express, any question to ask?" "No, sir, except you could lend us some books."

Now this request for books is a universal one, and it is hard to be sometimes obliged to refuse; but what can a chaplain or a head warder do when he has no books to lend? On one occasion a warder of our acquaintance was congratulating himself on having obtained a box of new books for his men, and was about to open his prize with eagerness. When he examined his treasures he found six 'Mavor's Spelling,' four geography books, six copy-books, eight volumes of tracts, and two amusing tales for children.

After the party has asked the chaplain any little favours, such as to get them a slate or a pencil, or a sheet of paper, the chaplain tells the warder to dismiss; the warder says, "Attention, put back your books, break off;" the men yawn, and dawdle slowly back to their work, looking as dull and stolid as if they were about to expire of utter laziness. This is at a service on the week-day. It is curious to see the same party of men if the chaplain can manage to give them a service on the Sunday. They seem really to enjoy it, especially the hymn or two which they join in singing. They consider it right and proper to have a service on that day, and they attend to what is said then in an orderly manner; but to be compelled to come away from their road making on a week-day in order to hear the chaplain read is what they hate, they seem to look upon it as a device to cheat them into being good, and are sulky and indignant accordingly.

Prayer, again, at morning and evening they do not seem to dislike when it is read by the warder, but at any other time of the day they object to the introduction of

any religious service. For the loan of an amusing book or two the convict constable will always be glad to undertake a walk of ten or twelve miles, and the warder of the party is equally glad to give him leave of absence for such a purpose.

Railway publications, Waverley novels and newspapers are devoured by the convicts, but they will not read religious books unless the pill is so well gilded by secular incident that it is swallowed for the sake of the tale; and, sad though it may sound, it is nevertheless true, that a surer symptom there cannot be of a man being worse than his fellows than his asking a clergyman for any book of which the subject is *solely* religious.

A ticket-of-leave man came once to our house to beg that he might be allowed a seat in church near the pulpit, on the plea of his being deaf, adding, "though if I only hear the text I can always tell what the sermon will be." Sermons, one would imagine, must have been superfluous to so well-informed a person, and, judging from his position as a convicted felon, it would appear that they had been useless also.

As to the effect which is produced by convict servants upon the personal comfort of masters and mistresses, it appeared to me that the trials undergone by heads of households from this cause in Western Australia often far exceeded the crosses and annoyances which were wont, as I have heard, in former days to beset West Indian owners of domestic slaves. There is no need to enlarge upon the risk which the settlers' children run of contamination from their fathers' labourers; and an anecdote that we heard from a neighbour, in whose family there had lately

occurred a change of servants, reminded us very much of the teaching imparted at the academy of the estimable Mr. Fagin.

Our informant said that her boys had come racing into the house, in great glee, to tell her of the wonderful tricks that "the new man" had been showing them; how he had abstracted a native's tobacco-pipe from the tight string round his bare arm where a native always sticks his pipe, "without his ever feeling him do it"; and how he had stolen a quantity of grapes from another man, "talking to him all the while he took them." The boys thought "the new man" was as good as a conjuror, and the curiosity of their parents being excited by the report of so much talent they made inquiries as to the cause of their servant's transportation, which, by the way, it is not usual to do in hiring a convict, and learned, as my readers will probably have already anticipated, that he had been a London pickpocket.

With whatever regret the colonists might look forward to the time when contracts for "rations" would be amongst the things of the past, there is no doubt that towards the end of the transportation period the majority of them were heartily sick of the convicts. Some of the settlers candidly owned the mistake which they had committed in supposing that the colony could be benefited by the inmates of English jails, whilst others bitterly complained that Government had broken faith in discontinuing to send picked men only, such as had been brought out in the first ships; forgetting apparently that a better use might possibly be found for offenders who were not incorrigible than transporting them.

An impression also seemed to be gradually gaining ground in the colony that the owners of farms could do their own work with the help of machinery more satisfactorily than with the assistance of town-bred thieves; and a friend of ours, in whose house for many years past nine ticket-of-leave men had daily sat down to dinner, had reduced the number of his retainers to two only before we returned to England, and had bought a sort of mechanical Briareus which, guided by one of his sons, was cutting his wheat-fields, when we paid him our farewell visit, in place of the seven servitors dismissed.

CHAPTER XV.

Schools on the Irish system — Roman Catholic schools — Schoolmasters — Scholastic squabbles — Convict tutors — Difficulties to educated convicts in earning livelihood — Festival of the Barladong Fair — Want of recreation — Silver mugs — Popular entertainment — "Paddle your own canoe" — Natives attracted to fair — Different costumes — Glass spears — Fights occasioned by betrothal and polygamy — Native laws respecting marriages — Sheep-shearers interrupted at dinner — Pitched battle in barley-field — Holding beard between teeth — Æsop's donkey — Khourabene in position of Mr. Swiveller — Khourabene brings home wife — Legacy of brother's widow — Khourabene's past history as married man — His escape from policeman — Finally acquitted — Reasons for contracting additional marriage — First wife deputes making of dampers to second wife — Ladies' quarrels — Khourabene and his wives — Khourabene an outlaw — His aunt's lamentations.

THE education of children in Western Australia was carried on in what were called Government schools, *quasi* National. The teaching in the Government schools was upon the Irish system in reference to the great number of Roman Catholic immigrants within the colony, whose children, it was supposed, would form the majority of the pupils. The concession thus made, of leaving out all distinctive religious instruction in the general course of education, met with as cold a reception abroad as it has done at home from those whom it was intended to please. The Roman Catholic clergy discouraged the children of their flock from attending any schools excepting those which had been established by themselves, and both priests and laity naturally felt aggrieved at having to

pay taxes for the maintenance of Protestant schools whilst supporting in addition the entire burden of their own.

A great stimulus was given at the Government schools by the distribution of prizes twice a year, for the purchase of which an allowance was made of a shilling for each child, according to the average attendance. Also, whatever lines of distinction were drawn elsewhere between the classes of bond and free, none existed within the school walls, where the children of convicts and colonists attended together, sat upon the same benches, and were treated in all respects alike. There was not any system of diocesan inspection of schools, and that of the Government had no home precedent, the Perth schoolmaster being permanently appointed as inspector of the schools of his fellow-masters, without any regard to the comparative value of his certificate and of theirs.

The amount of education acquired at these Government schools varied somewhat with the efficiency of the instructors who, in a struggling colony, must occasionally be such as it is possible to procure, rather than those really qualified to fill the situation. However, at the time of our arrival at Barladong, we found that the reputation which the climate of West Australia enjoys for checking incipient consumption had attracted thither, two years before, a schoolmaster, whose power of imparting knowledge was equal to that of any person whom we had ever seen at the head of a National school in England.

This painstaking gentleman, being under the impression that the faculties of colonial children could be drawn out by the same means as had proved successful with their English contemporaries, commenced a course of

"object" lessons; and in order to make them more interesting procured from home, at his own expense, little specimens of coke, "Wall's End," Kentish filberts, and many other productions of the land of their forefathers of which his Australian pupils were necessarily ignorant. It unfortunately happened, however, that any method of instruction which appealed directly to the intelligence of the scholar was as great a novelty in Barladong as it would have been in some parts of England fifty years ago, and the local Conservatives, who had never before heard of such roads to learning as lessons on objects, denounced them as sheer waste of time, devices of the master's own invention to save himself the trouble of teaching.

These objections had but little weight with candid parents, who noticed the improvement of their children in spite of such unusual means of promoting it; but in the small society of Barladong there were some to whom a schoolmaster of the only type that they had as yet seen brought profit of another kind, and who little relished the appearance amongst them of one whose education and refined manner seemed to challenge a respect which had not hitherto been accorded, in that place, to a member of his profession. The publicans gained nothing by him, for he spent no money in drinking, and his thrift made him independent of the storekeepers, both of which classes had been used to consider that a schoolmaster was a creature habitually "out-at-elbows," who would thankfully receive payment in kind for posting up their books.

A clamour, in which the self-interests of different parties dovetailed, and in which each made a tool of the other, was accordingly raised against the schoolmaster,

accusing him of indolence and inefficiency, and the Colonial Board of Education took advantage of the outcry to practise a little economy in issuing a completely new reading of the terms of the schoolmaster's appointment. He had been appointed in England to his post during the colonial secretaryship of the Duke of Newcastle, at a salary of one hundred and fifty pounds a year, with a free passage to Australia on the same conditions as those on which the Government chaplains receive their passage-money, namely, that half the sum shall be refunded to Government if they return to England before the expiration of three years. Ordinary minds had hitherto supposed that this stipulation was framed to prevent imposition upon the Government, but the new interpretation which was given to it by official intellect made it as clear as daylight that the appointment itself was good for three years only. It was therefore notified to the schoolmaster that, if he thought fit to retain his post beyond that period, he must content himself with receiving a payment of one hundred pounds a year only, instead of one hundred and fifty.

In this case the schoolmaster's course clearly was to commence an action at law against the Colonial Board; but to do so would have required a far greater sum than that which he sacrificed in resigning his situation. He shook off the dust of Barladong from his feet, and with his wife and family left the colony for Melbourne, proceeding thither by the advice of my husband, who felt sure that such real abilities as a teacher, although low-rated in Western Australia, would be certain of appreciation in Australia Felix. It was hard to be driven away,

at the cost of all his little savings, from an appointment which he had received as permanent, and it was also hard that those who had learned to discern the merits of the master should be deprived of the benefit of them for their children, but in a few weeks after reaching Melbourne he obtained the charge of a school so far superior both in importance and in remuneration to the one which he had left, that his enemies, in causing him to quit Western Australia, eventually proved his best friends.

In the houses of settlers, who lived at a distance from any Government school, we sometimes found a convict engaged as tutor to the children and keeper of the farm accounts, but employment of this kind for those released prisoners who are capable of undertaking it is not so easily obtained by them as might be supposed. The truth is, that learning is of less value in a rough and but partially cleared country than a pair of hard hands, and the consequent difficulty that an educated man of the bond class finds in earning mere bread is sometimes so great that even the victims of his dishonesty at home would perhaps feel satisfied that his punishment was proportioned to his offence, if they could see his struggle for a bare existence. There is great inequality in the penalty of transportation, and although it may be truly urged that the educated criminal deserves a heavier punishment than his illiterate neighbour, yet the fact remains the same, and whilst the former class of offender is sometimes on the verge of starvation, the agricultural convict can become a landed proprietor on no worse conditions than those of being contented to work hard and to forswear drink.

Leaving the subject of schools and tutors, I shall now pass on to that of holidays and merry-makings.

The chief festival season in our little town was the annual cattle-show and fair, which was held in the month of October, the time of year when the country was in its most beautiful dress and the weather most pleasant for travelling. The neighbouring settlers were in the habit of inviting their friends and relatives to gather around them during the fair week, and there was more gaiety and merriment in those few days than in all the rest of the year put together.

On the Sunday the church was crowded, and our little choir generally got up an anthem in honour of the visitors. On the Monday the day was employed in preparing the pens and enclosures for the cattle-show, and in decorating the Mechanics' Hall with devices, made of everlastings and zamia leaves, in readiness for the forthcoming festivities whatever they might be.

Sometimes a ball would be given by subscription among the principal settlers; another year the attraction would be a fancy fair; another season, perhaps, the hall would be taken up for a large tea-party, followed by a concert performed by the musical talent of the district, assisted by friends from Perth and Fremantle. Whatever might be the amusement chosen there was always *some* kind of gathering, and the young people thought about it and talked about it for weeks beforehand, and vied with one another in the composition of elegant garlands and decorations for the walls of the building.

On the Tuesday the cattle-show and fair was held, followed by the annual meeting of the Agricultural Society,

and by a public dinner in the evening at one of the principal hotels. On the Wednesday everyone flocked to the race-course, where the contests seemed to afford far more pleasure than is often created by the struggle between the high-bred animals at an English meeting, since everyone knows both the horses and the riders, and takes a deep interest in their success. The festivities are nominally over after the conclusion of the races, but the excitement has by this time risen to such a pitch that the remainder of the week is barely sufficient to cool it down, and no one thinks of returning into the beaten and monotonous track before Saturday night has passed.

In these six days seemed to be concentrated all the amusement of the year, and the shepherds and labourers from the bush farms, who could probably count every human face that they had seen for a year past, crowded into the town by scores, too often to return penniless after having spent a twelvemonth's wages in the tap-rooms of Barladong. There is no country in the world, I should think, where "Jack's dullness" is so excusable as West Australia if the old adage be true, for nowhere are there fewer means of recreation or amusement; in fact the labouring man, except perhaps at Perth, has literally no possible change of scene and companionship open to him, when wearied by long monotonous labour, except the public-house bar.

A country must have arrived at a certain stage of prosperity and wealth before any provision for public amusements can be made, or a class of public entertainers can be expected to arise who would provide such amusements as a matter of business. Much, therefore, as one would

rejoice to see concert-rooms, public gardens, circuses, and even theatres, if well conducted, established in Swan River to provide innocent recreations for the large number of convicts sent out from England, there seems no hope of anything of the sort occurring, and things must remain as they are until the colony grows richer.

The principal feature in the fair was the show of horses, cattle, and sheep, prizes being given to the most successful exhibitors. One of our friends had won so many prize-cups that his children had not required the intervention of sponsors to supply them with silver mugs, since his sideboard was furnished with one apiece for the whole family. This, unfortunately, was the case only when we first visited our friend, for before we left the colony the cups had been stolen by a convict. As long as a thief could find no means of disposing of such plunder all articles of plate and jewellery had been safe, and money alone had presented any temptation to the evil-disposed. When, however, two or three silversmiths and jewellers of the bond or expiree class had been allowed to open shops, in which gold or silver bullion was a legitimate trade possession, the case was altered, and the thief was tempted to resort to the melting-pot if he could manage to lay his hands upon anything of value. I do not mean to say that any of these tradesmen would knowingly have received stolen goods, as I am aware of no grounds whatever for such a suggestion; what I wish to notice is that the thief now thought he had a chance of disposing of such property since it had become an article of daily sale and barter.

A popular form of entertainment often practised at the fair, and borrowed from the Wesleyans, possessed the ad-

vantage of combining the receipt of a fair sum of money for some local purpose with the pleasure of an evening's amusement. This was commonly known as a "tea-meeting," being a joint affair of *soirée* and *conversazione,* where a certain number of ladies banded together to provide each a tea-tray, containing twelve cups and saucers, and cake in a like proportion. The china and eatables having been conveyed to a given spot, the doors were thrown open at an hour agreed upon beforehand, and, on the payment of a fixed sum, usually one shilling, the public were admitted, for whom the ladies forthwith commenced pouring out tea. When this had continued a sufficient length of time the trays were cleared away, and speeches made, interspersed with singing.

There was generally a "tea-meeting" on occasion of the fair, and, as I have already noticed, sometimes a ball, the discussions as to which hotel it should be held at out of four that our town boasted, or whether it should be held, not at a hotel at all but at "the Mechanics'," occupying as much time as a long parliamentary debate, with such frequent adjournments as sometimes to threaten the young people with a total postponement of their dance for another twelvemonth.

The one week over, the curtain dropped on all gaiety, harmless or otherwise, and hard unremitting work had to begin afresh. An occasional wedding might have broken through the sameness of the routine had the spot been anywhere else in the world's geography, but in five years not one marriage of persons belonging to the upper class occurred in our district.

Sometimes the young people could not maintain the

perpetual struggle with dullness until the fair again came round, but begged for an intermediate excitement (like a relaxation in Lent) no matter what, nor how humdrum, only something that should vary the tedium of their one-coloured every-day life. It would then be proposed that a lecture should be given, not that instruction of any kind was particularly wished for on its own account, but because, if divided into two parts, it admitted of an amateur performance, vocal and instrumental, being introduced between them.

At the close of one such entertainment an old colonist, who was member of the Honourable Council and a leader of the Wesleyan body, on the plea of thanking the lecturer, stood up to make a speech, when, instead of diverging into religion as was the general expectation, he launched out into political economy, probing the point on which most of his hearers were feeling very sore, "the withdrawal," as he expressed it, "of the convict element from amongst us," meaning in plain English, that the colony was no longer to enjoy a large and increasing convict expenditure. Having got thus far, he took it for granted that his hearers would ask him for the benefit of his advice, so assuming to himself the character of the god in the fable, and assigning to them the part of the man in the mud, he went on to say, "My nephew has been lately in England, and has brought back a song—one that I like, for it contains an idea;—it is called 'I have paddled my own canoe.' That's what you have all got to do now,—as my nephew's song says—Paddle your own canoe!"

With the help of this quotation, falling back on it as

on a text whenever he did not quite know what to say next, the old colonist made a long and amusing speech, interspersed with anecdotes of his own early adventures in the colony, but offered no suggestion as to the best, or indeed any means of "paddling" beyond propounding that if somebody could find rock oil, or as he expressed it "find an oil mine," it would be a good thing. However, the discourse was deferentially listened to, on account of the speaker's position, which was a very substantial one, and when he sat down the nephew good-naturedly responded to the call for the song to which such frequent reference had been made.

The attraction of the fair, but especially that of the races, never failed to fill the town with natives, who always congregated to merry-makings of any kind whatsoever, and Khourabene used to extort promises from us, months beforehand, of being granted various articles of dress, in which he might make a becoming appearance upon the race-ground. Neither was it for the white people only that the fair was an occasion for a dance; the natives must also have their ball or "corobbery," the dressing for which is quite as important a business to them as the preparations for a presentation at court would be to any lady or gentleman at home, only that the style is left to the discretion of the guests, and no one is limited to any costume in particular. The greatest amount of fancy is shown in the arrangement of the hair, which is adorned with emu's or cockatoo's feathers, or bound round the temples with the yellow tail of a wild dog, or with anything in fact that is thought to have a suitable and distinguished effect.

Bunches of scarlet feathers are often fastened on the upper part of the arm like a pair of short sleeves, and a defiant look is given to the countenance by sticking a smooth white bone, the length of a quill pen, through a hole in the cartilage of the nose, just as a careful henwife will run a feather through the beak of a fowl that persists in sitting at an inexpedient time.

On one occasion Khourabene affected a pointed beard in the style of Louis Napoleon, having shaved off his whiskers in the most faultless manner with a piece of glass; he next proceeded to cover his head with a shock of minute ringlets, using the stem of a tobacco-pipe as a substitute for curling-irons.

Warlike accoutrements are, of course, as much *de rigueur* at a "corobbery" as a sword in court dress, and the weapons in which most pride seemed to be taken were the formidable "glass spears," so called because they are armed for about the length of a foot with small bits of broken glass stuck firmly to the shaft with the resin of the Xanthorrhœa. In former days these spears were armed with sharp fragments of quartz, the glass being an improvement dating from the arrival of the English, and the consequent strewing of the country with broken bottles. These last, beside being useful for arming spears and for shaving purposes, are employed by the natives in cutting deep decorative wounds several inches long upon their shoulders and chests which, when healed into wide-seamed scars, are highly prized as personal improvements, and certainly have this one advantage over all removable ornaments that they are not affected by the native rules for exchange of portable property. Both men and women were

embellished in this manner, and I believe that the ornamental process takes place in early youth. My husband used to say that these scars reminded him of the self-inflicted wounds of the priests of Baal, who "cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets" in honour of their god.

"Corobberies" end with fights more frequently than not, for which, were all other causes lacking, the native customs of betrothal and polygamy would alone afford plentiful excuses. There is the *mariage de convenance*, and the marriage by entail, and there is the runaway marriage which is the most illustrious of all. The first is a family arrangement between the parents in which the parties most interested have no voice, though they render their lives forfeit if they do not carry out the domestic contract.

A settler told me that he and his wife had had a native girl in their service for two years, when one day her affianced husband appeared at the door to claim his bride. It seemed a very matter-of-fact business, and scarcely a word passed between them; she did not show any wish to leave her place, nor any partiality for the bridegroom, and, in the words of my informant, "the two walked away together as sulky as bears."

After marrying his betrothed the man is at liberty to increase his number of wives if he can; but, unless he becomes the heir of a deceased relation, each fresh alliance must be one of theft, both the girls and women being all either married or betrothed and therefore the legal property of somebody or other from their earliest youth. However, as nothing tends so much to raise a

native's own opinion of himself as the stealing of a wife, aboriginal society is in a permanent state of broil, whereby the peace and quiet of white people is sometimes disturbed in a most unexpected manner.

The wife of a small farmer told me that whilst presiding at her sheep-shearing dinner the house door suddenly flew open, and a native stalked in, dragging after him his recaptured wife by the hair of her head. Several other natives trooped in behind, apparently as spectators, for none of them seemed disposed to rescue the unfortunate woman. The mistress of the house, however, played the part of good "Sister Anne," and, hustling the wife from the clutches of the black Bluebeard, pushed her into an inner room, the door of which she defied him to enter.

Another time, a neighbour of ours, on looking out of his window, espied a fight going on in his standing barley —*kylies* were flying, and the combatants had crammed their beards into their mouths in true martial fashion. Our friend hastened to the spot to save what remained of his crop, and his acrimony against trespassers in general was not diminished by the alighting in his own leg of a spear which had been aimed at one of the combatants. His wife ran gallantly to his assistance with their gun, but as it proved to be unloaded, she did not effect much by her good-will.

The cause of the quarrel proved to be that their own native servant had stolen another native's wife, and the barley-field had been selected to settle the matter in, not from personal malice to the owner, but simply because the place was convenient. The same might be said of a good many historical battle-fields.

The holding of the beard between the teeth is as regular a preliminary before beginning to fight, amongst natives, as the taking off of a coat might be with English people, and I have read of a hill tribe in India who follow the same fashion.

I do not know in what light the women regard their abduction; they are often, no doubt, consenting parties, and at other times, perhaps, their feelings resemble those of the donkey in Æsop's fable. That sagacious animal, it may be remembered, showed no anxiety to escape from the pursuing enemy, who could not, he was convinced, load his back with heavier pack-saddles than had already been laid on it by his own master.

The first instance that we met with of wife-inheritance was when one day Khourabene marched up proudly to our door, holding by the hand a little girl of five years old, well wrapped up in furs, with a string of blue beads round her throat. He introduced her to us with a beaming smile as his little "Gorda," or sweetheart, and explained that she had originally been betrothed to his cousin, who had lately died, and to whose property in her as a future wife he had succeeded as heir-at-law. In fact, his position was precisely that of Mr. Swiveller with a young lady "saving up" for him. "Gorda's" education was in the meantime entrusted to an old native lady, from whose hands Khourabene had borrowed her for the day that we might see the chattel which his relation had bequeathed to him. He seemed to have very correct ideas as to the propriety of making his betrothed bride a present, and asked my husband to give him sixpence that he might buy her a whistle.

Some weeks afterwards Khourabene entered our kitchen followed by a very ugly woman who looked a good deal older than himself, and whom he introduced to us as his wife Sarah. I asked him what had become of his little "Gorda," and he said that he had made over his right in her to another relation, and I fancy that Sarah must have been thrown into the bargain as a sort of make-weight. I looked the bride over to see what feature I could compliment, and was able, with truth, to praise her small hands and feet. She was a poor depressed-looking thing, but raised her eyes with a faint pleased smile on hearing what I said. However, Khourabene seemed quite proud of her, and though my suffrages were gratifying they evidently were not needed to increase his admiration.

The word "settled," which has become a sort of colloquial synonym for married life with us, does not at all apply to that estate amongst natives. The passion for roving, as I have already said, is stronger in the women than the men; so that natives with wives are far less desirable as servants than those who are single. Poor old Sarah, however, seemed no great gadabout, and everything might have gone on comfortably, only that just about this time Khourabene came in for another legacy in the shape of a second wife. This was his brother's widow, whom, by native customs, he inherited as if she had been an estate, with the liberty of cutting off the entail, if he thought good, by bestowing the property upon another native, a privilege of which my husband earnestly begged the heir to avail himself, as we knew that the widow was a good-for-nothing creature, and

Khourabene's history as a married man had not hitherto been so fortunate as that he could afford to run any more risks.

His first wife had given him reasonable ground for a divorce and he had obtained one by the native rule of spearing her; if he had not done so, he would have infringed his country's laws, but by his obedience to them, he laid himself open to the penalties of our code. The colonial Government has, naturally, proscribed all native customs which involve homicide, and, a police-warrant being issued for his apprehension, Khourabene could evade it only by hiding himself in the bush. At the end of two years he was captured; but it is difficult to find handcuffs that shall fit aboriginal wrists, and Khourabene slipped himself loose when the policeman who had apprehended him lay down to sleep under a tree, doing so, no doubt, with a safe conscience, as he had not only manacled the prisoner, but had also fastened him to himself with a chain.

The eyes of our wily friend twinkled with fun as he described to us his cautious lifting of the links, and the manner in which he had tickled the face of his snoring captor with a bit of grass to make him move into a convenient position whilst he worked his own release; so confident too was he in his noiseless tread, and in the soundness of the enemy's sleep, that on second thoughts he even risked a return to the same spot, after he had freed himself, in order to secure a loaf of bread from the policeman's wallet.

Some time afterwards Khourabene was again caught, and carried down to Perth to take his trial, but the case

was dismissed, either for want of evidence, or as he himself believed, because he had "done the state some service" in preventing the escape of another prisoner. No past experience, however, could induce Khourabene to forego the increased importance that he would gain in the eyes of other natives by the possession of two wives, though, perhaps, it is a want of charity to disbelieve his own assertion that he "must marry Polly" to ensure her being treated kindly. "Another black fellow," as he said to me, "would beat her if she lost his pipe."

I was vexed at the introduction of this second wife on Sarah's account, for, though she made no complaints, nothing will ever persuade me that any woman, though a Mahommedan or a savage, who has once been "the better half," is otherwise than chagrined at becoming a third or quarter partner in the matrimonial firm.

The manner, however, in which human beings receive the unavoidable circumstances of their lot varies with the disposition of the individual. A native man and his one wife had worked together so long and so harmoniously for a friend of ours that he had ceased to remember polygamy as one of their national institutions, and felt himself rudely recalled to consciousness of its existence by the return of his man-servant from a short absence, carrying a young native girl upon his back, whom he deposited amidst the family circle, and formally introduced as his spouse number two.

Our friend, much disturbed at the incident, remonstrated against such unworthy treatment of the first good old partner, but receiving no other answer than the repeated assurance — "new womany *quorba*" — meaning that an

additional wife was a good thing, he appealed, in perplexity, to the elder wife herself (as if, poor soul, she had had any voice in the matter!) and was more than ever taken aback by the coldness with which that lady heard his condolences. "Let her come!" said the original mistress of the hearth, waving off sympathy with a contemptuous air; "let her come—*she'll do to make the damper!*" Whether in this particular instance the baking of dampers by the second wife helped to extinguish family feuds I never heard, but judging from what we saw of other cases I should imagine that the contrary was to be expected.

In the presence of white people one native wife will sometimes content herself with making faces and shaking her fist at the other behind her back, but these demonstrations are mere amenities when compared to a real and serious quarrel, fought out with the long wands which the women habitually carry, (as the men their spears,) and which, in action, they handle like the English quarter-staff. In one such duel, which was described to me by an eye-witness, one of the women dropped dead upon the spot.

Khourabene's wives, however, being hardened women of the world, and too wise to quarrel, found a common bond of union in making him a regular slave to them both. They played upon his love of flattery, (which he possessed to as great an extent as if he had been highly civilized,) and by dint of calling him "fine gentleman fellow," and praising his kindness, persuaded him to fetch and carry for them like a dog. Though we always paid him in money they grudged his doing a day's work for us, and

were never contented unless he was escorting them hither and thither to this or that "corobbery." The last sight I had of him he was sitting on the ground, twisting scarlet worsted into fillets for the hair of these two baggages who stood by him overlooking his work. They took no share in winding the worsted, but he had made himself independent of help by stretching the skein from the toe of his right foot to the thumb of his left hand. A few days afterwards we heard that Khourabene was again a fugitive, accompanied by Sarah only. The quondam widow, adorned in her becoming head-dress, had given him cause for jealousy, and he had speared her.

We never saw our wild man again, though he sometimes sent us secret messages, and would have paid us visits on dark nights if we had given him the least encouragement, but to all hints of this kind we turned a deaf ear, lest by his venturing near the town he might fall into the hands of the law. We missed him sadly, and the place did not seem like itself without him; it was some consolation that the police could not find him, and we earnestly hoped that they never might. His faults were those of a savage, and his virtues also; neither was it ourselves only who regretted him. Natives are very kind to their aged relations, in fact Bishop Salvado goes so far as to say that if ever an Australian woman can be called happy, it is when she is old; and Khourabene's outlawry was much deplored by his poor old toothless aunt, who would come creeping up to our fire, and dropping herself and her smoke-dried kangaroo skins down beside it in what looked a very homogeneous heap, would beg for a little list of excisable articles, tea, sugar,

and tobacco, bemoaning with tears that her children were all dead, and now that "her boy Khourabene was run away, there was nobody to 'look out'* for poor old Caroline."

* *Look out*, in English, as spoken by the natives, is the received expression for taking care of anything.

CHAPTER XVI.

West Australia regarded as the "ugly duckling" by sister colonies — Contains, nevertheless, best timber in the world — *Jarrah* wood — Its indestructible nature — Blue gum — Formation of timber company — First railroad — York gum — *Casuarina* — Suitability of *Jarrah* for railway sleepers — Improvement of Cockburn Sound — Shingling of roofs — Sandalwood trade — Whale fisheries — Whaling almost monopolized by Americans — Ball on board the whaler — Registrar's statement of abundance of whales — The "gentleman from Tasmania" — Overland expedition to Adelaide — Incidents related by M. Rossel — Government geologist — Discovery of new pasture land — Tommy Winditch's announcement — Pearl fisheries — Hawk's-bill turtles — Sponges — Western Australia viewed as a field for emigration — Necessity for raising loan — Manner of carrying on business in the colony — Influence of merchant-class: when and how injurious to a colony or beneficial to it — Instance of labourer desirous to clear land — Help from storekeeper — Reason of land being rented — Small farmers often little better than carriers — Clearing lease — Necessity for great variety of information — West Australia unattractive to large sheep-owners — Presents a different aspect to small capitalist — Prospects offered to the hard-working immigrant — Great preponderance of convict over free inhabitants — Antagonism between classes to be dreaded — Colony unsuited to persons possessing small fixed incomes — Storekeeping ten or twelve years ago — Expense of imported goods — Suitability of West Australia to labouring men and invalids.

THE foregoing pages were written from recollection of what Western Australia was when we left it two years and a half ago, rather too short a period, perhaps, under ordinary circumstances, to effect much change in the existing state of an old country, but sufficient, in a colony as in a growing child, to produce a marked development of stature, and a great modification of feature. It cannot be said that the advance of West Australia has been very

rapid in the interval which I have mentioned, but it has, nevertheless, showed signs of real progression, and, despite the unfavourable circumstances of its birth which, in nursery phraseology, have made it "backward on its feet," there are reasonable grounds for believing that it may, even yet, learn to run alone.

The different members of the same household are sometimes slow in recognizing the gifts and graces of each other, and Western Australia has long been regarded by the sister colonies of the great southern continent somewhat as the "ugly duckling" of the family. I do not know whether these more successful neighbours have, as yet, revoked their opinion, but a fact, which has long been known to the friends of the unlucky fledgling, has at length received solid acknowledgment in Victoria, to wit, that the much-contemned colony of Swan River contains, in inexhaustible quantities, the best timber in the world.

"Self-love and social" were long ago pronounced by Pope as identical, and the truth is that the days appear to have gone by when the settler in *any* part of Australia can hope to make a fortune in a few years by the rapid increase of his flocks and the proceeds of his wool. The fortunes of Australia, as a whole, can no longer be embarked in one enterprise, and, as no country in the world, perhaps, possesses more varied resources than West Australia, the eyes of the neighbouring colonies naturally turn towards her in their desire to strike out for themselves new and lucrative branches of industry.

Now the one product of timber alone will probably hereafter, more than make up for all the disadvantages under which Western Australia has suffered hitherto.

Hundreds upon hundreds of square miles of her territory are covered with forests of magnificent trees, many kinds of which are of great value to the house-carpenter, the machinist, and the ship-builder; but none of them more pre-eminently important than that which, in common conversation is called "native mahogany," "*jarrah*" in aboriginal language, and in scientific speech, "*Eucalyptus marginata.*" The qualities of this wood may even bear the palm when placed in rivalry with heart of oak. The white ant, the *Teredo navalis*, and the barnacle are all alike foiled by its powers of resistance, but its most striking characteristic is, that it scarcely shows the slightest symptom of decay after being many years steeped in water. A log, which had formed part of an old bridge and had been seventeen years immersed, was exhibited in London in 1862, one of its sides being planed and polished in order to show the slight extent to which it had deteriorated Although exposed to water for so long a period, and with three feet of its length sunk in mud, one inch alone was in a state that could have been described as less good than new. The harbour-master of Fremantle also drew attention in 1862 to the fact of two buoys of *jarrah* wood having been afloat in that port for eight years, and having needed no other repairs during that time than the supply of a few new iron hoops.

The timber which ranks next in importance to the *jarrah*, and is said, indeed, to be of nearly equal value to that wood for naval purposes, is another species of *eucalyptus* known to the colonists as the blue gum, which, in the words of an old report on the statistics of Western Australia, "attains to a very considerable growth in many

parts of the country, and particularly on portions of the southern coast westward of King George's Sound, where it is easily accessible for shipping, and exceeds the size required for beams of the largest man-of-war." The blue gum is said to be unfit for masts and spars on account of its great weight, although well adapted for machinery or planking of any kind, in which last capacity its immense length must offer great advantages, as it attains a straight growth of more than a hundred feet without knot or branch.

The red gum, *Eucalyptus resinifera*, furnishes also a hard close-grained timber fit for naval purposes, but its numerous "gum veins" render it unfit for outer planking. The same old report from which I have just quoted says that iron corrodes very little either in the *jarrah* or the red and blue gums, but its author's recommendation of the blue gum for the upper works of men-of-war "on account of the impossibility of either splitting or splintering it" was evidently given before turreted ships and ironclads had been dreamed of, and it must wait to be experimented upon until the day when, according to maritime croakers, England will break up her metal fleets and once again defend herself with wooden walls.

The time has arrived, however, when the boundless wealth of the West Australian forests shall no longer be produced in vain, and since our return to England a number of persons belonging to Victoria, have enrolled themselves under the name of the "West Australian Timber Company," to whom, in the words of the Governor at the opening of the new Legislative Council at Perth in December, 1870, "Her Majesty's Government" have per-

mitted him "to make very liberal and special concessions." His Excellency announced, in addition, that "another Melbourne company" had since asked concessions which it was also in his power to grant.

The first-named company commenced its operations at Géographe Bay, whence they have already laid down a line of railway (as yet unique in the colony) stretching eleven miles into the interior as far as to their head station of Yokonup, which is situated in a dense forest of *jarrah*. At the ends of the line, which it was hoped would be formally opened by the Governor himself last June, townships are springing up under the respective names of Yokonup and Lockville, and more than four thousand logs of wood, which had been previously contracted for, are said to have been lying ready last April, awaiting their transit on the arrival of the expected "locomotive" from Melbourne.

The *jarrah* has now become so completely the chief building timber in all parts of the colony, that other descriptions of wood have, perhaps, had scarcely a fair chance.

The coachmakers and wheelwrights speak very highly of the merits of another of the *eucalyptus* tribe called the York gum. This timber is very hard and close-grained, and wheels made from it seem to stand the great dryness of the atmosphere and the destructive effects of the rough bush roads remarkably well. I have heard of a pair of dray wheels which had been in constant use for more than four years without showing signs of any deterioration. I was also once shown a very pretty gun-stock which had been made of York gum, and it seems to be likewise well suited for all kinds of millwright's work.

The *casuarina*, or shea-oak, has been found valuable to the cooper, as casks made from it have worn well, and given great satisfaction to buyers. But it is to the *jarrah* forests that the colony must look for any really large and important timber trade.

A commission of inquiry was held at Adelaide, a short time ago, for the purpose of investigating the real merits of Swan River mahogany, especially in connection with all descriptions of harbour works and piers, and it was then proved that, when properly felled and seasoned, the piles of *jarrah* are almost indestructible.

In India, also, a large demand for both railway sleepers and telegraph posts of this wood will be certain to arise the moment that engineers can depend upon having their orders executed with certainty and dispatch. Hitherto the difficulties of bringing the logs to the shore, and then of putting them on board ship, have been so great, that to load a vessel of eight or nine hundred tons with railway sleepers, has been a three months' work. Now that better prospects are opening, and that the Indian railway companies are aware that both energy and capital are embarked in the enterprise of developing this trade, there is every prospect that very large orders will reward the enterprise of the new timber companies. It was stated, on official authority, a year ago, that, if such an order could have been undertaken at that time, certain firms in India were desirous of contracting for upwards of one hundred and fifty thousand pounds worth of *jarrah* timber for immediate use.

Should the proposal of carrying out a large ship jetty and other similar works at Cockburn Sound, so as to

establish a convenient port there, be carried out, as there seems good reason to hope may be the case, (since this plan is earnestly recommended by Mr. Doyne, consulting engineer to the Governor,) every facility both for bringing the timber to the shore and for putting it on board ship would be afforded, and large orders could then be executed with rapidity and ease.

The trees which I have mentioned by name are but a few out of a variety vast enough to render West Australia, in respect of woods, a perfect paradise to an enthusiastic lover of the turning-lathe. The two woods most in favour for turning are the sandalwood and raspberry jam, on account of their perfume, but the *casuarina*, or shea-oak, deserves equal popularity, as it is a beautifully-marked wood, and capable of being worked down to a very thin edge. In this last respect, however, there is again no wood that can surpass the *jarrah*. Its grain is closer and firmer in texture than the Spanish mahogany, and it is a better wood for turning, that is, if a really fine log be chosen, such as was one out of which my husband turned a vase, the cup part of which was almost as thin as silver paper, without a symptom of the wood splintering or shaking.

The principal use to which the *casuarina* is applied is in the roofing of houses, for which purpose the wood is cut into long narrow pieces, called shingles, of the shape of slates or tiles; and as this kind of roofing is common throughout Australia, and an unlimited supply of *casuarina* can be obtained in Swan River, the new timber companies will probably do a fair share of business in the department of shingling alone. To be "a shingle short" is a

colonial phrase indicative of the same state of mind which is described in Scotland by the expression of "a bee in the bonnet."

I have spoken, in one of the earlier chapters, of the sandalwood trade carried on with China. As long as a supply of trees of fair size and weight could be obtained within a hundred miles, or even a hundred and fifty miles of Perth, with facility, this article of commerce was of great assistance to the settlers, especially to the lower grade of farmers. It afforded occupation to their horses and carts at times when nothing else was doing, and enabled them to obtain supplies from the storekeepers by the barter of this wood without being forced to trespass upon the proceeds of their flocks or of their cornfields.

During the dull season of the year they employed their teams to bring in the sandal logs which had been felled and trimmed in the recesses of the bush in the last few months by their woodcutters, and they usually found that a fairly steady demand for the sweet-scented wood, at the rate of 6*l.* to 6*l.* 10*s.* a ton, existed amongst the shippers and merchants at Perth. The usual price paid to the woodcutters in the bush, whether they were working for an employer or on their own account, seemed to be about 25*s.* a ton.

The value at Perth being what I have said, the only question to be considered was, whether the 5*l.* or 4*l.* 10*s.* a ton, (speaking roughly,) which they would have to receive as the difference, would be sufficient to compensate them for the wear and tear of their horses and carts, and the food and wages of their carters. Moreover it must be remembered that the buyers at Perth did not pay in cash,

but only by an allowance in their books of equal amount to the wood supplied, and reckoned as a set-off against the stores supplied to them on account.

As long as the distance from Perth was only forty or fifty miles the trade was a good one for all parties, and many of the smaller settlers were kept afloat by it alone; their horses could do the journey to Perth and return again to the bush within the week, and, even if they obtained no back load in place of the sandalwood, the cost of the hay and corn (which they usually had to carry with them) and of the wagoners' wages was repaid, and a good profit remained. But now things are altered. All the sandal-trees of any size within a radius of a hundred miles of Perth have been cut down, and the woodmen must now go to much greater distances to obtain a supply of good logs.

The supplies of food to the men who are cutting are rendered expensive by carriage out; the wood when cut and trimmed has to be conveyed over mere bush tracks for perhaps thirty or forty miles before a well-made road is reached; a team and wagon therefore, instead of returning from Perth for a fresh load within the week, is obliged to be absent a fortnight or even more, so that all the expenses are increased while the value of the wood remains the same. The truth is that the trade may now be said to have come pretty nearly to a stand-still. The cost of carrying the sandalwood to Perth and of putting it on board ship now all but balances any profit to be made of it by sending it to China.

Next to a trade in timber the whale fishery ought to be the most obvious source of wealth to Western Australia;

and in 1846, when Bishop Salvado first landed in the colony, whaling had, as he says, brought large sums of money into it. But either through want of capital or of enterprise, or the lack of both combined, together with a dreamy reliance on the all-sufficiency of Government "contracts," the colonists, for many years past, have contented themselves with merely fitting out boats intended to fish from the shore, instead of following the whales over the ocean in well-found ships, like the Americans, so that now the capture of even one solitary fish is considered a very noteworthy occurrence. In the meantime the whale fishery *par excellence* has passed into the possession of the watchful Americans, whose ships the colonists have seen returning year by year with the utmost regularity, contented to buy of them the sperm oil, which ought to have been their own, whenever the alien fishers thought fit to dispose of it in Western Australia.

I found that before the breaking out of the war between North and South which detained American sailors upon their own shores, the arrival of the Yankee whalers at a stated season had been quite looked forward to by the inhabitants of Bunbury and the Vasse, not only as a little break to the twelvemonth's uniformity, but also as a source of friendly intercourse and trading. One of our colonial acquaintances, who had a cattle station near Cape Naturaliste, told us that at one time a whaling captain was in the habit, on the expiration of his annual voyage, of leaving an empty ship's cask in her hands to be called for in the following year, by which time she was accustomed to have it filled for him with salted beef. The urbanities of life were also mingled

with business, and a ball, given on board one of the temperance whalers and described to us as being "coffee and cakes all night long," seemed to have been an epoch in the life of our acquaintance and her friends, whom the polite givers of the entertainment had brought from the shore in their own long boat.

Amongst the signs which may now be noticed of a general wakening up of the West Australians is the fact that the Perth journalists are beginning to call attention to the whale fisheries, and to suggest that it might be as well if the colonists reaped the benefit of them for themselves. That the harvest would be an abundant one may be judged from the report of the colonial Registrar-General, who states, in the census of 1870, that "from Camden Harbour in the north to the extreme boundaries of the colony on the southern coast, whales are to be found in great numbers, the right whales on the feeding grounds in the bays, and the sperm in large schools off the shore." The Registrar also adds that "American whale ships, engaged in sperm whaling, have taken, during the past two seasons, about four thousand barrels of oil, the value of which is from forty to fifty thousand pounds." After this statement it is consolatory to find, in the same report, that "a gentleman from Tasmania" is about to establish himself at Albany, in Western Australia, in order to fit out a vessel from that port for whaling operations.

Perhaps, however, no event of greater importance has occurred in the colony, since our return to England, than the carrying out of the long-desired wish that an exploring party should cross the territory, hitherto scarcely trodden by the foot of man, that lies between the settled districts

of West and South Australia. This formidable tract, formerly called Nuyt's Land, better known at present under the name of the Great Australian Bight, has been supposed to be, and probably is, the most absolutely waterless portion of the surface of the earth.

It was once before traversed by the intrepid Eyre, who followed the windings of the coast, imagining that if rivers existed at all he should thus make sure of falling in with them; but never surely could greater aridity be conceived than that which it was his fate to encounter. His companions died beside him on the way, and he owed the preservation of his own life to the fidelity of a West Australian native, who had started with the party, and who carried him when too much exhausted to walk. By the time that the good native reached the abodes of civilization, with his master on his shoulders, the two men had performed a journey of nearly seven hundred miles, without having seen the smallest rivulet in the course of their march.

The present Governor of Western Australia conceived the happy expedient of sending out a party of explorers, who should be assisted by a vessel dispatched in the same direction and well supplied with food and water, with orders to meet the land travellers at certain points of the shore. In this manner the journey was undertaken and performed by a party headed by Mr. Forrest who, after suffering some privations, arrived safely at Adelaide, and the winter having been a favourable one, the Governor states in his speech, to which I have already referred, that the explorers "traversed a very large extent of the finest grass country, nearly destitute, however, of surface water."

The possibility of crossing Nuyt's Land may therefore be considered as settled, although it remains to be seen whether, by the sinking of Artesian wells, the discovery can be made of any use beyond the very important purpose of establishing a line of telegraphic communication between the two colonies.

M. Rossel relates, in his account of Admiral D'Entrecasteaux's survey of this arid coast, that a naturalist who accompanied the expedition went ashore on Nuyt's Land in search of curiosities, and straying too far was very near dying of thirst before he could rejoin his companions. Perhaps this French *savant* would afterwards have willingly subscribed to Shakespeare's opinion of the "uses of adversity," for he declared that the discovery which he made of a little stream of water, just as he had abandoned all hope of life, was strong testimony to his mind of the existence of God.

To the three decided proofs of colonial progress which I have now enumerated in the formation of the timber company, in the establishment of a whaler at Albany, and in the success of the overland expedition to Adelaide, the appointment of a Government geologist, about a year ago, must be added as a fourth. Up to the time of our return to England in the commencement of 1869 the existence of gold in Western Australia had been only surmised as probable, from the "minute specks" of it which, as I have said already, might be found in washing the sands in the beds of some of the water-courses, and no very vigorous measures had as yet been taken for the discovery of the metal in greater quantities. A great anxiety, however, to find gold had been aroused by the prospect of an ebbing

tide in the flow of Government money, and our last farewells on board ship were exchanged with those who were about to commence digging in earnest.

The tidings which were brought by the last mail seemed fraught with greater probability of success than any which had preceded them. A tract of country to the eastward of Champion Bay, "where the Silurian formation occupies a large area," and rocks are described as "precisely similar to the gold-bearing rocks of Victoria," is spoken of by the 'Perth Inquirer' of April, 1871, as having been found by a little party who rode out for the purpose of inspecting (in company with the Government geologist) a locality from which a native had brought them some specimens of cinnabar. In consequence of their provisions running short, whilst yet within two or three days' journey of the mine which the native had spoken of, the explorers turned back when they reached the longitude of 122° east; or about three hundred miles east of Champion Bay: having found such great abundance of grass and fresh water that their horses are said to have returned much fatter than they were when they set out.

Since this retrograde march, which occupied eight days, the geologist, Mr. Brown, has retraced his steps in order to make further examination of the country, and, in the meantime, whether the hopes that are entertained of gold prove deceitful or not, the opening of "fresh fields and pastures new," extending farther back from the sea-coast than any that have ever been previously discovered in the colony will, or ought to, console the seekers for want of the precious metal in case of disappointment.

Bituminous substances have long been known to exist

in various parts of Western Australia, and it appears that the advice which the Wesleyan Member of Council delivered at the Barladong "tea-meeting" to look out for "an oil-mine," has been wasted neither upon his fellow-colonists nor upon the aborigines. At this propitious moment, when the colonial Government is said to have been in communication with capitalists in neighbouring colonies who are desirous of establishing kerosene works, one Tommy Winditch, a native of Barladong, has come forward to report the existence of a substance "resembling water," at a spot about fifty miles eastward of Mount Stirling, where it is held in great dread by the natives on account of its explosive properties when brought in contact with fire. On being shown some kerosene Tommy Winditch pronounced it to be precisely similar to the "white stuff" so much dreaded by his friends, and, should he prove to have spoken correctly, and the fluid be found in any great abundance, we may surely expect to hear of his appointment as Commodore of those who, in accordance with the recommendation given to them, will henceforth "paddle their own canoe" in streams of petroleum.

The pearl fisheries of Roebourne were beginning to assume importance before we quitted Western Australia, and recent investigations have proved that the oyster beds, first noticed by the French, are almost unlimited in extent and yield. Mother-of-pearl is therefore likely to become one of the principal exports, more especially as the shells are of the finest description, and obtain in consequence the highest price in the English market. The Registrar-General states that some of the last shipments realized ten guineas a hundredweight. The shells were

formerly collected only at low tide and in shallow water, but the fishermen now employ natives and Malays as divers, who bring up the mother-of-pearl from depths which have been hitherto considered inaccessible.

It has been said that the natives thus engaged are much to be pitied for the treatment which they receive from the pearl fishers, and common sense would show that, amongst the rough class of men of whom many of the boats' crews are composed, the dark-skinned races are certain to be at great disadvantage, especially in a spot so far to the north, and consequently so remote from head-quarters. The season of pearl fishing begins in November and continues until April.

Tortoiseshell may also be procured in large quantities upon the north-west coast, as the hawk's-bill turtle abounds both there and upon the shores of the adjacent islands, but until lately it seems that people have not taken much trouble to collect it, owing to their ignorance of the value of such tortoiseshell in England. Since the announcement, however, issued by the Government, that the best shells are worth from sixteen to eighteen shillings a pound, the poor turtles will have had no lack of enemies. To these now well-known "treasures of the deep" I suspect that sponges might be added, for every heavy storm covers the Fremantle shore with so many different species of these zoophytes that it might reasonably be supposed that the sponges of commerce could also be obtained if search was made for them by dredging in a proper manner.

Having now sketched some few and imperfect scenes of West Australian life, and given some outline of the

resources which are offered by the colony, the question naturally arises as to what judgment I have formed of the country as a field for emigration. It is a difficult question to answer, since the prospects of the new-comer must depend so completely upon his own character and his own position in life.

The man of capital and of enterprise will find but little scope for his energies at present, unless he be contented to work almost single-handed. The struggle merely to live has been so hard and so continuous, that but few amongst the settlers have acquired a sufficient amount of realized and superfluous capital to induce them to enter upon speculative pursuits, however promising they may appear. The timber trade, the whale fisheries, even the pearl fisheries if upon any but the most moderate scale, have hitherto been compelled to look to the other colonies or to England for the capital needed for their development.

The only joint-stock company formed for carrying out any public work of which I have heard since we left the colony, is one for the establishment of a telegraphic communication between Perth and Fremantle, a distance of fifteen miles. I believe that this company has succeeded in obtaining the small amount of capital which it required, and that it hopes to extend its wires into the Eastern districts before the end of the present year; but this instance of the Perth and Fremantle merchants having banded together to carry out a common object is almost a solitary one.

With the exception of the West Australian Bank, which was formed on joint-stock principles many years ago and which has always paid excellent dividends, I do

not remember another instance of association of individuals for a public object. Harbours, breakwaters, piers, railroads, tramways, steamboats, and diving apparatus and bells for the pearl fisheries, have all been advocated in turn by the Perth and Fremantle newspapers; but however much the colonists may desire to witness the introduction of any or all of these improvements, they seem to look to Government action alone to carry them out.

To raise a Government loan, of a hundred or a hundred and fifty thousand pounds, to be expended upon public works, seems of late to be considered necessary, or at all events most desirable, by all parties in the colony. There can be no doubt that some measure of this nature must be adopted before long if any progress or improvement is desired or expected, and it would be but fair for the mother-country to aid her poor and struggling daughter in this matter by means of a guarantee, now that the Home Government has commenced to diminish her expenditure upon the convicts so rapidly.

It should be remembered that transportation to this colony was continued quite long enough to give the place a bad name with the rest of Australia, and to deter free emigrants of the better class from landing upon her shores. Now therefore, when by the fiat of the Home Government, influenced by the outcry made by the Eastern and Southern settlements, the system has been finally abolished, Swan River, which was willing to carry out her engagement, has been placed at a considerable disadvantage; left to struggle by herself against many obstacles, while she has been prevented from attracting a population of substantial settlers who might have had

both wealth enough and energy enough to develop her resources without asking for assistance from abroad. I do not mean to say that transportation alone has turned the stream of free emigration away from Western Australia, but only to assert that it has so far assisted to do so as to give the colony a claim to the sympathy and kind feeling of the English Government now that she is left to fight her battle alone.

The wealthy man or the capitalist, therefore, will not find much to attract him, nor many companions of his own class, should he visit Swan River. Perhaps the merchant or storekeeper with a small amount only of capital might do well, but this would depend entirely upon his character and his habits. Most of the successful storekeepers have been men who were brought up in the colony, and who know the position and prospects of almost everyone in it. So very large a portion of the business carried on is done upon credit that it is necessary to leave a large margin for bad debts, and to be careful as to the customers on the books. All this takes time and observation to learn, and renders it requisite for a new-comer to be cautious and distrustful of his own judgment at first starting. Then, again, many of the settlers have so long been accustomed to look upon some one or other of the storekeepers as their factor and banker combined, sending him all their wool and produce of every description and drawing money from him when they require any advances, that they are completely in his power, and dare not go to any newly-established store for fear of his anger; thus much of the trade would be out of the new-comer's reach, however low might be his prices for stores supplied, however high

the offers he might make for the purchase of colonial produce.

In a remarkably well-written account of the colony which appeared in the 'Melbourne Argus' a few years ago this point was entered into in some detail; and it was there said that, as a general statement, the country settlers were so much under the rule and influence of the chief storekeepers as to be scarcely free agents. No doubt this has been the case to a very large extent, but it is a species of misfortune which has affected other Australian colonies as well. Queensland, especially, has suffered from similar trials. And yet there is much to be said on behalf of the merchant class in this matter. It cannot be denied that it is injurious to a colony to fall into a condition in which all the working capital of the country has been accumulated in the hands of the trading men only. Competition is checked, energy is stifled, and expansion is hindered by the aggregation of the whole buying power of a district in one or two hands.

When the corn-grower, or the flock-owner, or the gum-collector is compelled by his own circumstances to dispose of his produce to one individual only, and to accept whatever that person may choose to give as the price of his merchandise, he loses his independence and ceases to feel himself a free man. By degrees he gives up the hope of improving his position, and contents himself with living on from day to day, sending to the store with which he is connected for as large an amount of supplies as the merchant is willing to furnish, and only too glad if, at the year's end, the balance against himself has not been increased. This is the position in which a very large number of the

smaller settlers have stood for years. And yet it has been through the action of the storekeepers that a considerable portion of the settled country has been cleared and cultivated, and without them much of the land which is now under tillage would be still wild bush.

A poor but hard-working man has, perhaps, managed to save money to the amount of one hundred pounds. He is anxious to establish himself in a home of his own and to purchase a few head of cattle, or a small flock of sheep, and also to clear and cultivate a few acres of land. If he hires a farm which has been already cleared and fenced (and many small places of this character will be offered to him if he is well known as a hard-working man), he will probably find the land nearly worn out by over-cropping, and the small run connected with the farm in poor condition and insufficient for the stock which it will nominally support.

If he is wise he will have nothing to do with an old cleared farm, but will take up a tillage lease from Government, upon the easy terms an account of which will be found in the Appendix. He must then commence his operations by building a rough bush house of perhaps a couple of rooms and an outhouse. Let him do this as cheaply as he can it will cost him both time and money, and the cost of his own provisions will have to be prepared for as well as the wages of the man or two he has hired to assist him.

Next comes the clearing of his land, say twenty acres to begin with. Clearing alone will cost three pounds per acre if he hires men to do it and reserves himself for the fencing, which he will be wise to do if he is a fair

bush carpenter. By the time that his house is built and his land cleared he will find that his hundred pounds is all spent, and more than spent—he will be in debt. Nothing will be left for stock, nothing for seed, nothing for food during the time that must elapse before his crops come in. It is in such cases that the storekeeper comes in with really valuable help, if only it be properly used. The man is known to be honest and hard-working. He goes to the store, before he commences to build or to clear his land, and mentions his prospects and his wishes, showing that he has some capital to begin with though not sufficient to start him without incurring debt.

It was in such cases as these that the sandalwood trade was such a help in the earlier days of the colony. The merchant, knowing his man, would perhaps say, "I will supply you with rations for yourself and the man or two whom you must employ while your house is being built and your land cleared,—I will also pay one-half of the cost of a cart and horse for you, and you in return shall do a part of my sandalwood carting for me at a fixed price, and let me have a certain proportion of your crops each year until the debt is paid off."

Now such help as this, although it must necessarily render the recipient dependent for a time upon him who has acted as his banker, gives a really honest laborious man a far better chance of establishing himself than he could have had without it, and there are individuals in Western Australia now thriving and doing well whose present prosperous condition is not a little due to the hand of the friendly merchant who kept them from sinking in their first struggle for independence.

But when the bargain is not fairly carried out—when the cost of the help given is constantly asserted to have exceeded that of the service rendered in return, the man and the horse become, and in no great length of time either, mere bond slaves at the beck of the storekeeper; whose debt can at last be liquidated only by the seizure of the house and bit of land, the cost of building and clearing of which was the original cause of the two men entering into compact with one another.

Instances of this character were of not unfrequent occurrence, and they seemed to us to account for a course of conduct on the part of many of the poorer class of settlers which had, at first, seemed strange. Instead of taking advantage of the facilities offered them by Government for acquiring homes of their own by clearing and building for themselves in the bush, men of this class, who had saved a little money, often preferred to pay a high rental to some of the large landowners for small and unproductive farms, which had been in cultivation for years and were almost worn out. They seemed to think that it mattered not in the least whether the land was new or old, provided that it was cleared and ready for ploughing, and to believe that the rent would easily be paid out of the crops, which they expected to raise with the very roughest cultivation and without a particle of manure. They therefore laid out the money in their possession upon a couple of horses and a cart, and looked, not to their land, but to the sandalwood trade for their profits.

If a man of this class happened to get hold of a small farm which had not been quite worked out, and was lucky enough also to have two or three good and fruitful seasons

in succession, he did pretty well, and might make money if he was careful. His wheat paid his rent and found his family in bread, his barley and his hay kept his team of horses in good condition; so that after he had ploughed and sown his own few fields he was able to spend, perhaps six or seven months of the year, in carting sandalwood for the merchants at Perth at a very fair rate of payment.

As long as the seasons were favourable to him such a settler might go on comfortably and prosperously, and pay his rent without much difficulty. But his position was always a very precarious one. If even but one or two bad harvests happened to come together his ruin became almost certain, because he had nothing to fall back upon, no sheep, no cattle, nothing but his few fields and his team of horses and cart. This has been one of the evils of the sandalwood trade. It has tempted men to look upon the possession of a wagon and three or four horses as a certain means of making money quickly; the land has been cared for only for the sake of providing food for the team, it has therefore been only half attended to and half cultivated; no stock (except a few pigs) has been kept, because the man himself has been obliged to spend the greatest part of his time upon the road to and from Perth carrying the sandalwood; in short he has been a carrier much more than a farmer.

It is easily seen that even one bad season must bring such a class of men into trouble, because in that case everything upon which they depend gives way together. Their wheat fails and with it their power to pay the rent; the barley and hay crops are deficient also, and thus the power of feeding the horses, and keeping them in condition for the heavy labour of the sandalwood trade, goes

too, and the poor creatures pine away for want of sufficient sustenance, until unable to earn for their masters the usual profits upon their labour.

Sometimes a bad year will tell so heavily upon the horses as almost to put a stop to the sandalwood trade altogether, and, in letters which we have just received from the colony, we are told that this has been the case during the last few months. What can one of these small settlers do in such a position? He has nothing to sell off his land, as his crops are scarcely enough for his own wants. How is he to pay his rent? How is he to get seed for next year? Only one course is open to him; he *must* mortgage his team and his carts to the store-keeper who supplies him.

When once this measure has been forced upon him a log is round his neck from which he will find it difficult to free himself, and, if he is not very careful and very hard-working, he will sooner or later find himself enslaved with far less chance of extrication than the man who, in the case of which we first spoke, became indebted for the assistance given him in clearing his own land and building his own house. The latter having no rent to pay for his farm can average one year with another, and make the good years balance the bad; while the tenant of another person's land at a high fixed rental, though he may seem to have a better chance of making money just at first, has not the comfort of looking forward to a time when, having paid off the advances made to him at starting, his land and house will have become his own; a home for his wife and family for which no rent is ever to be paid, where he can live in comfort without fear of any notice to quit

being served on him, or of any landlord's agent interfering with his method of cropping his land.

Another method of making a start in the world which was sometimes practised, and for which the assistance of the merchant or the landowner would be invoked, was the following. The labourer would engage to clear a plot of land, to the extent of forty or fifty acres, at a certain number of acres each year, on condition that rations were supplied and other assistance given by the employer for the first year or two, and that the whole of the land, as fast as it was cleared and fenced (the employer finding posts and rails) should be cultivated by the tenant for his own profit for a fixed number of years, rent free. In this case although the tenant had to turn out of the little farm, which he had cleared with his own hands, at the expiration of perhaps ten years, still he had enjoyed the use of the greater part of the land in its fresh vigour, and the crops which he had taken off were probably the best it would ever produce.

The merchant, then, who may think of carrying out a small capital to West Australia must be prepared to act in a variety of capacities, and to play the part not only of exporter and importer of goods, but also that of factor, agent, and banker to his customers; and very probably that of sheep-owner and squatter to a greater or less extent also, in cases where he may find it more to his interest to take into his own management the business and property of some of his larger debtors than to attempt to realize the assets, on which he has the largest claim, at a period probably of depression and panic.

To make money in this colony a man must learn to

understand all its products, all its various forms of employment, and must teach himself, by degrees, to be as much at home in the valuation of the flocks upon a sheep-run, the cattle upon a farm, or the trees in an acre of mahogany forest, as he is when engaged in the more legitimate calculations of a merchant's business, such as pricing silks and broadcloths from England and France, wines from Spain, or teas and sugars from Singapore. It has been by this correctness of judgment in every branch of colonial business, and not by confining their attention to any one class of speculation in particular, that the successful men have made their money in Swan River; and what has been done by them may be done again by a new-comer if he goes to work in a similar manner.

Such, then, as far as we were able to form an opinion from our own observations and from the conversation of others better qualified to judge, are the capabilities of this colony with respect to trade and commerce.

The natural products of Western Australia are numerous and valuable, and are, by degrees, obtaining a larger share of public attention than has hitherto been vouchsafed to them in the other Australian settlements. The capitalists of Sydney and Melbourne are beginning to inquire whether new fields for speculation are not to be found in the forests and the pearl banks of their Western sister, and it seems probable that, under the energetic rule of the present Governor, Mr. Weld, himself an old colonist of New Zealand, every encouragement will be given to the enterprise and activity of all who may desire to aid in the development of her resources.

Want of capital has hitherto kept Swan River in the

background, and, if this want be supplied, it seems far from improbable that in the course of a few years more she may be able to prove, to those who have hitherto despised her, that though she cannot compete with New South Wales or Victoria as a wool-growing or cattle-raising country, she is nevertheless rich in some valuable products in which those colonies are deficient.

To the wealthier class of settler, the owner of a hundred thousand sheep or fifty thousand head of cattle, West Australia would not seem to offer many attractions. The runs are upon a much smaller scale than those to which he has been accustomed, and he would probably consider the character of the trade carried on in the colony to be uninteresting and contracted, tending too much both to small profits and slow returns. But to the smaller class of capitalist, who possesses only a thousand or fifteen hundred pounds, the country presents a different aspect. He will find many small properties now in the market, and at a price within his reach, upon which he would have a fair prospect of doing well and making a comfortable home for his family. He must be ready to turn his attention to anything which seems likely to increase the profits of his farm, to set up a steam-mill, for instance, if the district seems to afford a fair opening, or to establish a store, if one appears to be wanted in his neighbourhood, or to take a share in a contract for horsing the mail cart in his part of the country if it seems likely to yield a return; he must not be content to sit still and to let others get ahead of him in the race for success, but must keep his eyes open and be ready to make the most of *all* the openings which may fall in his way.

It has been in this manner that all the settlers who have really made money have acted, while those who have confined themselves strictly to farming and wool-growing, and attempted nothing else, have but seldom done more than just to keep their heads afloat. And now I must speak of the prospects offered to the immigrant who has nothing but his own hands and arms to trust to, the agricultural labourer or the artisan.

I may say at once that any man who is steady, honest, and sober, and who is not afraid of hard work, will have every prospect of doing well, and of raising himself to the position of a small proprietor in the course of eight or ten years. The great objection to the colony in his case would be the necessity for associating with convict fellow-labourers. That this *is* a great drawback to the colony in the eyes of respectable immigrants it would be useless to deny. It is proved by the eagerness shown by the majority of them to leave for Melbourne or Sydney as soon as they have saved sufficient money to carry them thither.

The whole number of convicts landed in Swan River, from the commencement of the system in 1851 up to its cessation in 1868, has been about ten thousand. Of this number many have died, some have left the colony, and others have become merged in the general population by the expiration of their sentences. According to the census of 1870 the number of men still under the charge of the authorities is about four thousand, including those still in confinement; expirees being classed as free men.

Now as the total population of the colony is only 25,000, and that out of that number only 9300 are free

adult males over fifteen years of age, it is easily seen that the very large majority of the labouring class must be either convicts or expirees. The fact is that almost all the labour of the colony is carried on by their hands. A few free immigrants are found, chiefly artisans, but the "Government men" are so decidedly in the majority that the whole mass of labour in the country takes its colour and tone from them, and the free man is looked upon as an interloper, a trespasser on their rights, and disliked accordingly.

Here, perhaps, lies the great danger to the future of the colony. If anything should occur to cause an influx of free immigration, such as the discovery of a valuable gold-field, the convict element would soon lose its predominance and its influence amongst the labouring class, and a healthier state of things would arise. Otherwise an antagonism between labourers and employers will continue to exist, (for the children of the convict parents will always be kept at arms' length by the free settlers,) which may have bad effects in any period of distress or pressure, such as a series of deficient harvests for instance, and may lead to mischief, as a similar state of things has done in Tasmania.

There are, however, many situations in which the free labourer would not be exposed to that association with the convict class to which he seems to be so averse, and I cannot but think that the feeling against Swan River on this account is an exaggerated one. To whatever land the emigrant may turn his steps he will find that in the earlier portions of his career he will meet with rough and distasteful companionship, probably quite as disagreeable

to him, as an untravelled Englishman, as the better class of convict, with whom he has at least the common ground of speaking the same language and having lived in the same country when at home. The American "rowdy," the New Orleans gambler, the San Francisco free-fighter, or the Chinese miner of Victoria, would, no doubt, prove quite as unsuited to his home-country feelings as even the Swan River expiree.

The quiet hard-working man whose chief ambition is to establish himself in a little farm of his own with his wife and family around him, and who is willing to accept the position of shepherd to one of the larger settlers for a few years, may soon save money; and, in the course of five or six years, may hope to find himself able to start on his own account, with every prospect of doing well and becoming a small landowner.

The class to whom the colony is least of all suited would seem to be those who are dependent solely upon a small fixed income, such as the chaplains of the Church of England, the ministers of the various non-conforming denominations, the lower grades of the Government officials, and the country schoolmasters and mistresses in Government employ. Their incomes are very small compared with the expenditure absolutely necessary for the maintenance of themselves and their families in a position of respectability, while, unlike the settlers in general, they are unable to pay for any of the goods supplied to them by the barter or exchange of their own produce, (since they do not possess any land or stock,) but are obliged to settle all their bills by cheques upon their banker. No one who has not had personal experience of this

state of things can form any right judgment of the whole system. In Perth or Fremantle so many of the residents are in Government employ, that payments in money are far more frequent than in the country districts, and prices are, in consequence, far lower than in the little inland towns. Moreover even in the inland districts competition has arisen during the last few years, and new stores have been established wherever there appeared to be a good opening, so that prices have been considerably lowered in comparison to what they were ten or twelve years ago. At that date the storekeeper in each country district enjoyed a virtual monopoly. His prices were fixed, not so much by any consideration of the actual cost of his goods to himself, as by the distance of his nearest competitor and the amount of profit which that competitor was charging.

From eighty to a hundred per cent. upon the larger and heavier goods, up to even a hundred and fifty per cent. upon smaller articles, was commonly charged, as profit upon the London invoices, in the country stores, so that he who had nothing to offer in exchange, but was obliged to pay in money for all his supplies, soon found his store bills run up in a manner which his fixed income as a Government *employé* was by no means calculated to meet. In short I think that all those who have ever lived for a few years in the country districts in Western Australia will agree with me in saying that it is by no means a colony in which a small fixed income, such as the two hundred or two hundred and fifty a year received by the chaplains, can be depended upon to procure anything more than the very barest necessaries of life.

To the labouring man, to the settler with moderate apital, or to the merchant, Swan River offers fair prospects of success, but to those who possess merely education without money to back up their acquirements, to the clergyman, the banker's clerk, the struggling and disappointed man of business for whom competition has been too severe at home, to such as these the colony is unsuited, and they would have a far better chance of eventually doing well in England.

Of the value of the colony as a settlement within easy reach of India, and admirably suited for the establishment of a Sanitarium for our troops, much has been said and written, and it is to be hoped, in the course of time, these discussions may bear their legitimate fruit.

In conclusion, I will only add that if I were asked what I thought would benefit one whose lungs were weak but as yet undiseased, I should recommend a twelvemonth's visit to Western Australia as a probable means of averting consumption, but I should advise that the time was spent amongst the homes of the colonists in the bush rather than in the towns. A stranger would meet much hospitality in either place, but the same causes which render the petty provincial towns of England notorious for dullness and gossip exist in far greater force in the embryo cities of a colony, whilst the fact that the habits of life in vogue are framed after the English pattern brings more strikingly into notice the colonial backwardness of thought and education as compared with recollections of the mother-country.

But life in the bush has an original character of its own, and although books are scarcer there than in the towns,

yet, in consequence of the bush people making no pretence to book learning, their want of it never struck me as a painful deficiency. Their days are spent in employments that have been the favourite theme of poets from time immemorial, and no leisure is left them for discussing the doings of the next-door neighbour, even were there any such person within seven miles.

Thus it would seem that Goethe's remedy against the evil of too many books is equally good in the case of having too few. In a pretty little letter of hexameters addressed to an anxious father, who is afraid that his girls' heads will be turned by reading too many works of fiction, Goethe tells him (but I quote from memory only) that he may avert the calamity by giving each daughter her own little sphere of rule within his household. Let him consign to one of the girls the care of "the vineyard and the cellar," to another "the kitchen and the herb garden," "the washhouse and the laundry" to a third, and "novelists," says the poet triumphantly, "may then write what they please, and the ladies be never the worse." Self-evident, however, as this conclusion undoubtedly is, and multifarious as are the female employments on which the poet enlarges, the avocations of a bush lady are still more diversified. He quite omits to mention the care of the dairy and the live-stock, and, much as he loves to picture his ideal cook busying herself in consulting the family tastes, I will wager that he never dreamed of her having to prepare the meals of an orphan foal, still less of that juvenile quadruped coming in at the kitchen door to be fed.

The seeker of health who can enjoy horse exercise will

never be at any loss for amusement in the bush, and if he happens to be fond of botany or entomology a whole world of pleasure will lie open there before him. As a bird collector he will find unfailing occupation, only he must take care that his ship's stores comprise a good supply of the best means of preserving his specimens, such as arsenical soap and appliances of a like nature, or many a trophy will be lost which otherwise might have embellished a glass case. In short, if the visitant be one who can find his chief amusement in the study of any of the various branches of natural history he will meet with ample food for his favourite fancy here, and will be obliged to allow that the despised penal colony, if not such an Eden as "blue books" have sometimes pictured it, is by no means wanting in quiet beauties and simple enjoyments; while, if health has been his main object, he may hope to carry back with him to his home in England such fresh supplies of strength as may enable him to contend victoriously with the uncertain climate of his mother-country, and cause him to remember with gratitude the elastic air and bright skies of West Australia.

APPENDIX.

TABLE OF LAND REGULATIONS.

COPIED FROM THE REPORT OF THE REGISTRAR-GENERAL FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA, 1870.

"THE existing Land Regulations were proclaimed in August, 1864, and special Regulations for Mining Leases, and for the occupation of Land in the far North and Eastern Districts in January, 1865. It is not necessary here to publish the Regulations in detail, but they may be shortly summarized."

Sale of Crown Lands.

"The Crown Lands are classified as Town, Suburban, Country, and Mineral.

"Town and Suburban Lands are sold by auction, at upset prices regulated by the Governor.

"Ordinary Country Lands are sold, at the fixed price of 10*s.* per acre, to the first *bonâ fide* applicant for the same, in lots not less than 40 acres each.

"A deposit of one-tenth the purchase money is payable when the Land is applied for, and the balance within one month afterwards, with title-deed fee of 1*l.*

"Remissions granted to Military or Naval Officers and Men."

Pastoral Land.

"For Pastoral purposes the Crown Lands are divided into Class A and Class B; and in the North and East districts into Classes A and C.

"Class A Lands are let for one year only, under Depasturing Licences.

"Annual Rent, 2*s.* per 100 acres, and no licence fee.

"No Licence issued for less than 1*l.*

"Full annual rent to be paid on application.

"Holders of Land in Fee Simple, of not less than 10 acres, within a Class A Licence, have a right to run gratuitously within such Licence one head of great stock for every 10 acres so held, and so long as said land may be let for Pastoral purposes.

"Lands in Class B are situate outside of certain defined Boundaries, and are let on Pastoral Leases of eight years. These Leases are not renewable, but the Lessees thereof have a preferable claim for renewal.

"No Lease to contain more than 10,000 acres, but any number of Leases may be granted to the same person. The annual rent for a Lease is 5*l.*, and 10*s.* per thousand acres for the land contained therein.

"Leases are granted without competition.

"These Leases contain pre-emptive rights of purchase of any portion of the land (not less than 40 acres) during the first year.

"After the first year of a Lease, all unsold land is open to general selection for purchase.

"Homesteads may be selected by Lessee during the first year, at the rate of two acres for every acre of run, with a right of purchase of any part thereof within the first three years.

"Purchasers of Lands within B Leases have the same right of depasturing cattle as in Class A Licences."

Tillage Leases.

"Lands for Tillage purposes are let on Leases for eight years. No Lease to contain more than 320 acres. Any number of Leases may be granted to the same person. The annual rent is 1*s.* per acre, payable in advance, but no Lease is granted for a less sum than 5*l.*, except for the last half of a year."

North and East Districts.

"Lands in these Districts are disposed of on more liberal terms than in any other parts of Western Australia.

"The North District is comprised between the sea coast and the meridian of 120° East longitude, and to the North of the River Murchison and of a true East line through Mount Murchison.

"The East District is comprised between the meridians of 121° and 129° East longitude, and between the South coast and latitude 30° South.

"The Lands are divided into Class A for annual Licence, and Class C for more extended occupation. Class A comprises all land within two miles of the sea coast, and Class C the remainder. The rent of Class A Lands is 5*s.* per 1000 acres for the first four years, and 10*s.* per 1000 acres for each of the second four years.

"Class C Lands are let on Pastoral Lease for eight years, commencing first of January next after application.

"The rents of Class C Leases are at the rate of 5*s.* per 1000 acres for each of the first four years, and 10*s.* per 1000 acres for each of the second four years, with a fee of 5*l.* at the commencement of each Lease, but not after the first year."

Mineral Lands.

"Lands known or supposed to contain minerals are termed 'Mineral Lands,' and are sold as such to the first applicant for the same, in lots of not less than 80 acres each, and at the fixed price of 3*l.* per acre, payable by a deposit of 1*l.* per acre at the time of application, and of a similar amount on the same date in each of the two following years."

Licences to Test Mineral Lands.

"Any person desirous of testing the mineral qualities of land previously to purchase, may obtain a Mining Licence for one

year, subject to renewal for a second year, at the option of the Governor. The rent chargeable to be at the rate of 2*s.* per acre for the first year, and 4*s.* per acre for the second year.

"No Licences granted for a less term than one year, or for a smaller sum than 8*l.*

"The holder of any Mining Licence may exchange his Licence for a Mining Lease for any period not exceeding ten years, and at an annual rent of 8*s.* per acre paid in advance.

"For the same period, and on the same terms, Mining Leases shall be granted to any other person on approved application."

NATIVE SCHOOL AT PERTH.

Since the foregoing pages were written the Bishop of Perth has carried out his wish to establish, under his own eye, a school for native children similar to that conducted at Albany by Mrs. Camfield. The pupils have been removed from Albany to Perth and are now, under the superintendence of the Bishop, entrusted to the care of one thoroughly well suited to a post of such responsibility, Miss Sheperd, late mistress of the Girls' School at York. At present the native children are accommodated in temporary quarters; but a building expressly intended for the Native Institute has already been commenced and will shortly be completed, when it is hoped that an earnest and united effort will be made by the colony to carry out the purpose which the Bishop has so much at heart by the establishment of a large and prosperous native home.

PALM WOOL.

One of the most useful productions of the colony, which has been accidentally omitted from notice in the previous pages, is the fine elastic substance, resembling wool, which is found at the base of the leaves or fronds of the Zamia so common in Swan River (*Zamia spiralis?*). It is much used for bedding and similar purposes, and might become a valuable article of export, as it may be procured at the price of a few pence per pound from those who collect it.

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